Carlotta's Intended

Ruth McEnery Stuart

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THE MERCANTILE HOUSE OF DI CARLO

Carlotta's Intended

By

Ruth McEnery Stuart

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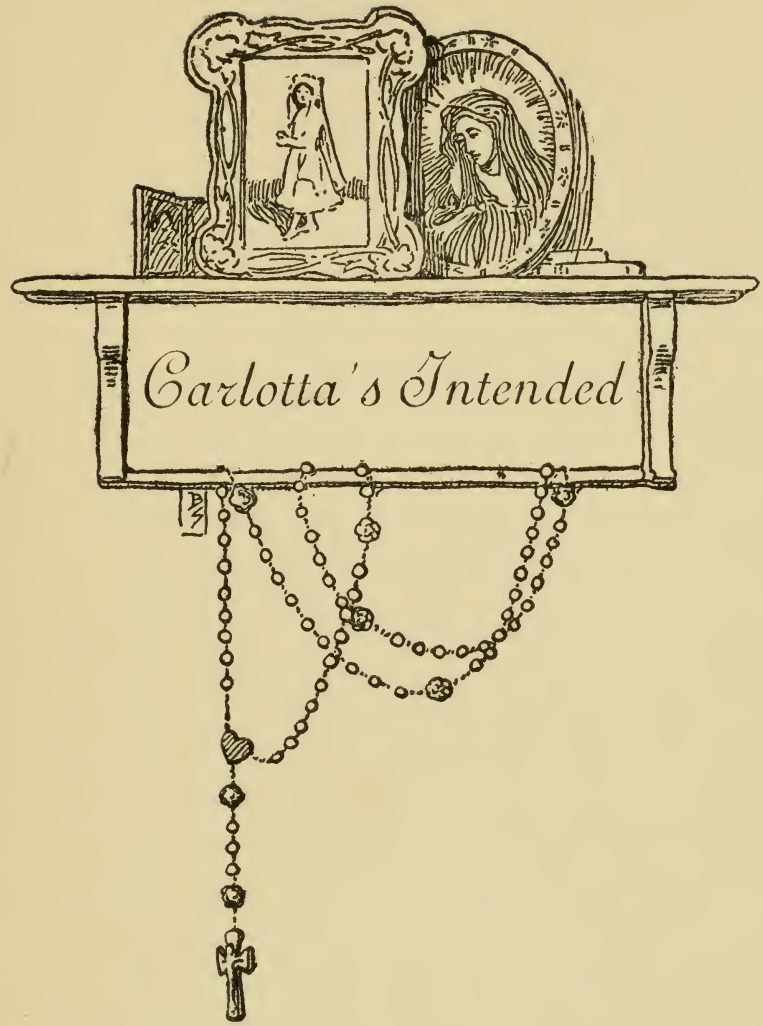
ILLUSTRATIONS

THE MERCANTILE HOUSE OF DI CARLO . . . *Frontispiece*

"SHE LOOKED NOT UNLIKE THE STATUES OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER AND CHILD" . . . *Facing p.* 26

"AND THE THREE FOLLOWED THE CHILDREN HOME" . . . . . " 60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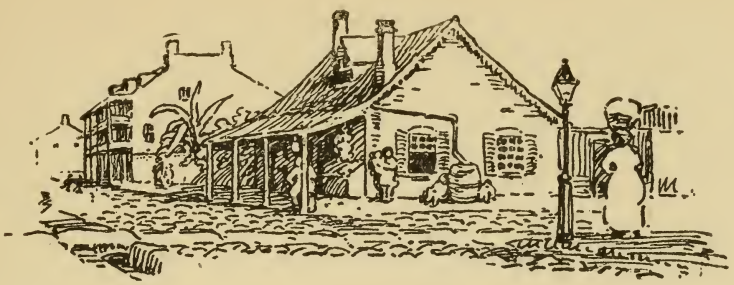

Carlotta's Intended

I

A SHORT, swarthy, gray-haired old man who swung his little legs on both sides of the barrel upon which he sat; who smoked a stumpy old pipe; whose one heavy eyebrow ran clear across his forehead; who wore tiny gold ear-rings and seldom cut his hair, who spoke in monosyllables—such was Carlo Di Carlo, "the Dago."

A tall, fat, blooming brown creature, loud-talking and voluble, full of fun and temper, luxuriant to coarseness; whose bust measure and age were both somewhere in the early forties; who seemed fashioned for laughter and unlimited maternity; who sat every evening on the front door-step of the shop opposite her husband—this was the Signora Di Carlo.

A dainty bit of a girl, radiant as *petite;* dark as her father, symmetrical as her mother of twenty years before, whose slim figure was just throwing out hints of future perfections; whose long black hair was as straight as an Indian's, but fine as the down upon the head of the babe who lay crowing upon the mother's lap; who was reticent like her

father, but whose mother's fire flashed from her eye on occasion; a girl to love, to hate, to do and dare—behold the sweet daughter, Carlotta Di Carlo! The discerning eye beheld in her promise of romance, possibilities of tragedy, and he who looked upon her once paused to look again.

A row of little black-eyed dagoes of various ages and sexes, of various degrees of beauty, but all handsome; a healthy, picturesque, noisy lot, quarrelsome without pugnacity—these were the little Di Carlos.

A small square front room, with a low shed around its two sides over the *banquette*, an oyster-counter along its partition-wall; a fruit-stand spread beneath its sheds opening on two streets; a red lantern hung out at the corner for a sign—see the mercantile house of Di Carlo.

Within a front corner of the shop in winter, and out on the *banquette* in summer, his chair placed so as to command a view of the fruit-shelves on both sides, sat a one-legged cobbler, surrounded by his professional litter of old shoes, strings, and scraps of leather.

Fourteen years before Pat Rooney took this chair, engaging to pay for the rent and privileges of the same by doing the family cobbling—a fair enough arrangement with a circle of three when Carlotta was wearing her first shoes, but, to quote from Pat, "There's been niver a time since but the madam's been aither afther raisin' the rint on me or threatenin' to do that same, an' sure I'd

'ye deserrted long since if she'd iver sint me a notification be an ugly messenger; but whin she shteps out, 'erself bloominer 'n iver, wud anither wan o' thim black-eyed beauties forninst her buzzom, I do put by a fresh batch o' little scraps for patches an' trate mesilf to a dozen on the half-shell, on the strength o' the new-customer to the thrade."

The Di Carlos doubtless knew a good bargain when they had it, and so Pat had been encouraged to remain by perquisites in the way of oysters and fruit.

This, however, was a scant offset to an increase from one to nine healthy shoe-wearing boys and girls.

If Pat had begun to think seriously of the matter some years ago, the christening of a new-comer—when Pat had hobbled all the way up the aisle at St. Alphonse's one morning and recorded a sponsor's vows for a diminutive little beauty by the name of Patrick Rooney Di Carlo—held him firm to his chair for some time, and then—well, the signora counted on this, and became reckless, and there were twins, and in a year another. There's no telling what discontent might have begun to ferment in Pat's breast had it not been that Carlotta began to grow so startlingly beautiful, and young men and old men and boys began hanging about the shop when there was nothing to buy, or buying things they evidently did not want, and all the time looking at Carlotta.

Pat had petted the child, called her his "swate-heart," trotted her on his one knee and sung her to sleep to "Lanigan's Ball," from the time he came to the Di Carlo shop.

Only within the last year, however, since the halo of radiant womanhood had been hovering about her, had a tender solicitude for the girl entered his heart; and, although the signora, fortunately, did not suspect it, no added duty would have driven him from his post now.

And yet the Di Carlos had not been entirely unreasonable. Later concessions had been made. A room, the entire garret over the shop, had been placed at Pat's disposal, and here he had finally moved his few belongings—a cot, a chair or two, a huge green box which held his surplus clothing in a fraction of its space (such a wooden bin as the poor Irish emigrant usually dignifies by the name of trunk, and which one need not be English to call a box), a gaudy picture of the Virgin Mother with her heart aflame, a much-framed photograph of Carlotta in her first-communion dress, a rosary and a crucifix, and—hanging across the rafters—the moth-eaten remains of a bright uniform and a broken torch-lamp. For before his accident Pat had been an Irishman, a Fenian, an American ward-politician, and a festive leader in torch-light processions, pat-riot-ism, and the like.

Nobody ever knew just how or by whom the shot was fired that made him a cripple and a cobbler (and, he always added, "a Dutchman and a

dago, *to boot*," laughing alone at his final pun). But it was a fearful row. Three men were shot, and all came near dying but didn't die, and, as all the wounded carried weapons more or less spent, they considered discretion the better part of valor, and instigated no investigations.

All this was before the days of telephones and hospital ambulances, and Pat was carried into the shop of a German shoemaker, next door to the saloon where the shooting was done. He would probably have been sent to the Charity Hospital next day, however, excepting that his host, Hans Schmidt, had happened to be in the saloon at the time of the disturbance, and, his recollection of the matter being somewhat hazy, he had feared possible implications, and insisted on nursing the wounded man through his trouble.

The neatness of this arrangement lay in the fact that as soon as the convalescent was able to hold up his head, here was a trade for him, right under his eyes and hands. The ward-politician became an artisan, and, as he characteristically expressed it, "his first tool was his *last*."

"An' ye niver seen an Irishman a-mindin' shoes afore ?" he was wont to say on occasion. "Mebbe not ; an' yet divil a wan ud turrn 'is back on a *cobbler!* 'Tis thrue enough, in the ould counthry, 'tis the prastes that do be savin' our sowls for us, an' I'm worrkin' at the same thrade, savin' *soles* to feed me *body*. But the edge of the joke is, 'twas losin' me fut that set me to shoemakin'."

Thus by light and witty speech did he cover what he firmly believed to be a broken spirit.

A tedious convalescence, with enforced abstemiousness, had given him ample time for reflection, and by the time he had been nourished back to strength on apple-pie, cinnamon cake, *nudels*, and *smierkäse*, and found himself practically apprenticed to a shoemaker, he felt that he was no longer, even at heart, "one of the boys."

As soon as his period of invalidism was safely over, however, when his cautious and worthy host was assured that his life was no longer in jeopardy, things were rearranged on a business basis, and the terms were not satisfactory to the 'prentice, who, with a true Celtic alacrity, had mastered the trade to a degree that surprised himself.

Before the occupation of the corner shop by the Di Carlos, a cobbler had carried on a business here, by which he and a small barefoot family had managed to live; and when Pat discovered the change of tenants, the bright idea of slipping into this trade occurred to him — hence the proposition, conveyed by an interpreter, to occupy a cobbler's chair in the new fruit-shop.

The arrangement had much to recommend it. On wash-days, when the father and the boys were out peddling over-ripe stock, Pat often represented the entire business, calling "Shop!" on occasion, or even effecting a trade when there were no complications.

"Picayune o' lemons, is it?" he would say, for

instance, to the small-boy customer. "Fetch yer silver heer, till I feel the heft av ut. That's solid—rings like the bells o' heaven! Drop it beyant on the counter—so. Now, pick two big lemons or three little wans. That's a man; takes three middlin' sizes. He's got a business fist on 'im—'ll be a Vanderbilt yet—nades a shoe-string for *lagniappe*." And to himself, as the embryonic Vanderbilt departed, he would continue after this fashion:

"Faith, an' be the time I do worrk up me Dutch thrade wud a dago's business, an' throw in a Creole *lagniappe*, I do have to run me hand forninst me flabby pockut-book to know mesilf for a Paddy." And his soliloquy held as much truth as humor; for, notwithstanding the fact that he soon commanded a neat little custom, Pat's heart and hand were those of a true son of the Emerald Isle.

From the day she first put up her pretty red lips for the shaggy old fellow to kiss, his whole heart and purse had belonged to the baby Carlotta. As his mind had begun to run on shoe-leather, his first spare dollar had gone for a pair of little red shoes for her when she was barely able to toddle.

This was the beginning; and then there were other things—trinkets, a pair of gold ear-rings set with turquoises (and he had locked himself in the coal-house and stopped his ears while they were put into her little ears), and then, later, a thimble, then a prayer-book and mother-of-pearl rosary; and so it went.

As he petted the little thing and the other

babies as they came, he accused himself of an old man's fondness; though when this story begins he was in fact but forty years old.

"Little Lottie" came to stand in his life in place of all he had lost, and he took comfort in her, calling himself "an ould grandmother" while he buttoned her tiny gowns or washed her pretty little hands and face for her.

"Say, Carlo," said the signora, one day—this was when Carlotta was about six years old—"wad you say eef we geev-a C'lotta to Meester Pad fo' wife wan day, eh?"

"Indade, me respicted mother-in-law," Pat replied, laughing, "sure ye're too late shpakin'! Lottie an' me's engaged six months, come Moddy Graw."

And so it gradually came about that he called the pretty dark-eyed child "me swateheart," "me intinded," "me future," and the like, while she would always leave her father or mother to go to "Woona" (her best baby effort at his name in the early days when he was "Mr. Rooney" in the Di Carlo household).

Within the last year, however, while as unfailingly attentive and gentle, he called her only Lottie, and any allusion to the old jests was wittily turned aside.

In the evenings, after dark, Pat generally formed one of the family circle on the *banquette* about the doors, flavoring the conversation with his unfailing humor and mirth.

Usually at about eight o'clock the little father would jump down from his barrel, and, rubbing the leg that had "gone to sleep," hop around limping while he closed in the fruit-shelves, took down the lantern, and prepared to lock up the shop.

At his first movement Pat hobbled in, carrying his chair with him, the signora following, and bending over her sleeping bundle with a maternal "Sh-h-h!" as she passed in.

Finally, just before entering himself, the father called, "Toney! Pasquale! Joe! Anita! Neek!" and a crowd came rushing noisily in from the congregation of children half-way down the block, one or two of whom generally pursued them to the door for a "last tag" and "good-night," while a voice or two from the foremost Di Carlos answered from within, "Sleep tight."

As they flocked in, passing the little old father standing in the doorway, he looked proudly upon them and grunted his approval. They were a royal lot, and they were his.

The scene reminds one of a familiar barn-yard group—a little game rooster, a fine Brahma hen, and their brood of handsome chicks. The diminutive but pompous father struts around with a most important proprietary air, and, flattering himself, forgets to look at the mother. So it was with little Di Carlo. Men and roosters are so thoughtless.

It was true, Carlotta was a beauty, and every

one said she was the image of her father; and so she was—his image *inspired.* And the mother was the inspiration.

If the little husband reminded one of a rooster, a rooster who never crowed, it was not so much because the wife persisted in doing the family crowing, as well as cackling, as that it pleased him to sit by and smoke while she assumed his prerogative. One always felt that the crow was in him, and that he had full confidence in the volume of it. Such is the value of reserve.

In deference to Pat, the language of the evening circle was usually English. But though he had never attempted the Italian speech or professed a comprehension of it, fourteen years of such familiarity with it as the shop afforded had opened the doors of his understanding, and nothing less than a subtlety of meaning as far beyond the Di Carlos as himself would have eluded him now.

A sort of delicacy, however, forbade his revealing this to those who sometimes chose to speak in his presence without inviting his participation.

Among the occasional frequenters of the shop had been for some time an old man, Pietro Socola by name, for whom Pat had always felt an instinctive dislike.

During the past few months Socola had become a frequent guest, and while he sat on a box at the father's side in the evenings and spoke in a low tone in Italian, he was observed to cast

frequent covert glances toward the daughter, Carlotta.

Now, Socola was rich, according to the Di Carlo standard, and a widower, and so Pat was not super-suspicious in interpreting these glances as ominous of meaning to Carlotta.

The suspicion quickened his hearing, but the most assiduous eavesdropping had as yet disclosed nothing to confirm his fears. Gossip about the men on the luggers or at the Picayune Tier, discussions as to the rise or fall in prices of fruit or oysters, interspersed with long tobacco-flavored silences, seemed to constitute all their social intercourse; and yet—why did the ugly old fellow keep looking at Carlotta?

Socola was of the one essentially homely Italian type. His blue-gray eyes and reddish hair were bereft of any leaning towards beauty by a heavy swarthy skin, while the entire absence of upper front teeth gave a touch of grotesqueness to his ugly visage. Short-necked and square of build, he had nevertheless a stoop, producing an effect as if his face arose from his chest. The edges of his grizzly-red mustache were further colored from the tobacco which he perpetually chewed, and his hairy little hands bore about their blunt finger-tips similar suggestions of the weed.

Socola was plain, as well as distinctly deficient in the subtle charm which we call personal magnetism.

His wife had been dead but three months when

he first came on Sunday afternoon to the Di Carlos'. For three successive Sundays he returned thus, and then he began dropping in in the late evenings, until now almost any night he could be seen propped up on his box at Di Carlo's side, and whether Carlotta sat on the door-step working on her "sampler" or promenaded the *banquette* with one of the twins astride her hip, old Pietro's eyes followed her.

This, which Pat had been observing for some weeks, culminated one day in a tangible occasion for alarm.

He was sitting inside the shop, putting a finishing-stitch to a patch, when he saw Socola pass the door to join the circle about the steps without.

A moment later Carlotta hastily entered the shop, her face black as a storm-cloud.

"Come heer, Lottie," he called, quickly; and, as she approached him, "Whut ails ye?"

He had never seen her so angry. It was a moment before she spoke.

"Shpake out, Lottie, me girrl, an' tell me who done ye onythink."

"I don't like ol' Pietro Socola," she said, finally, her eyes flashing.

"Norr me naythер," he answered, shaking his head. "But tell me whut 'e done ye."

"He mashed my chin."

"Squazed yer chin, did 'e? An' may the divil snatch 'is mother from heaven!"

"Yas, an' try to kiss me. I hate 'im!"

"Thried to kiss ye, did 'e? Bad luck to 'is lonesome mouth! An' who seen um?"

"My paw an' my maw was a-talkin'. I don' know ef my maw seen 'im or not. She laughed. I hate 'im!"

"See heer, Lottie." He was much excited, but spoke low, lest he should be overheard. "There's throuble a-brewin' for ye, me beauty. Don't ye say northin' to nobody, but ef that low-down, dirrty, blue-eyed nagur av a dago lays the heft av 'is finger-tip on ye again, *ye go for um:* d'ye heer?"

She was silent, and he continued: "Wull ye do whut I tell ye, Lottie?"

"Yas."

"Well, take me advice an' kape out av arrm's len'th av 'im whin ye can; but whin ye can't, an' he so much as blows 'is breath on a hair o' yer head, ye come down on 'im wud a regular thunderin' polthogue—like this!"

He placed his closed fist against his own temple.

"See heer, colleen," he resumed, with some hesitancy, "I c'd lather 'im for ye—a couple o' hefts o' me peg 'd land 'im pantin' in the gutther—but 'twould do ye no good."

"'F 'e turn 'is sassy ol' eyes on me again, I'm goin' slap 'is face good," she said, as she turned to serve a customer.

A suppressed sigh escaped the cobbler, and his fingers moved nervously as he finished his patch.

His worst fears were materializing. Socola,

the rich, the honored guest, was coming for Carlotta.

His cobbling finished for the day, he rose to go to his room. He had not the heart to join the circle about the doors to-night. He hesitated a moment, and glanced without.

The signora had crossed from her seat on the step, and drawn a stool opposite the men—her husband and Socola.

The guest was speaking very earnestly in a low voice in Italian, and his audience listened with evident deference.

Pat heard distinctly Carlotta's name. Who can blame him for lingering, just a moment, to be doubly sure he was not mistaken?

But no, he heard it again, and then something about money—"a thousand dollars"—and the mother and father of the girl smiled, and, while they exchanged glances, nodded assent.

For the first time since he had been a teetotaler Pat staggered as he walked to the staircase, and when he reached his attic room he sank into his chair, trembling as if an ague possessed him.

He was bewildered as much at his own sensations as at that which had produced them. What did it mean? It was bad enough, but why were cold chills running all over him? Why did he think of the night he heard of his mother's death? Why was he sobbing before he could control himself?

Oh, Patrick Rooney, is it possible that you are in love?

It was even so; and the sudden revelation of the truth to himself seemed to seize and shake him to the foundations of his being.

The exquisite agony of the first discovery soon spent itself in emotion, but all night long he sat as one dazed, lost in wonder, bewildered.

II

When at last the day broke, when the explaining sun's rays lifted the veil that the moonlight imposes, and instead of shadows Pat began to see things clearly, he cast his eyes about him, as if to reassure himself and get his bearings. Everything in his meagre apartment seemed to hold some association with the child, Carlotta. Hanging upon the wall were the little worn red shoes, his first gift to her, bearing yet the impress of her baby feet. Within the lid of his big trunk, open before him, swung the tiny brass hook he had placed there so that she might safely fasten herself within, and, hiding here until the storm was over, she had escaped many a whipping from her mother. A row of auger-holes along the back, ruining the trunk, had further fitted it for her safe retreat. And she had never told. She had always been a rare child.

Every picture summoned by the associations was charmingly pretty, and when finally he cast his eyes down upon himself—upon his toil-stained

garments, his rough hands, his one untidy shoe—he felt as if he were blushing at a sense of his utter unfitness for her.

Seizing his mirror, a triangular fragment, he closely scrutinized his unshaven face and unkempt hair, and as he laid the glass down he turned his vision inward and backward upon the years of his life at the Di Carlos' and before. He thought of Carlotta when first he saw her, and of the years since. She had sweetened and cheered his life ever since he had known her.

She and this sacred love that had come to him were holy things, but what should he do with them—he, a poor, miserable, penniless, clumsy old cripple? It was a terrible, terrible folly, this love; and yet, despite the hopelessness of it, despite the vivid ludicrous view of it which his Irish perception afforded, he felt transported by it into a state of painful ecstasy. What should he do with himself—where go?

For one thing, he must bathe and shave and cast off these ugly, dusty garments. The sacred thing that had come to him required this much of him.

It was late in the morning before his toilet was complete. His ordinary hurried ablutions "for dacency's sake" were performed with reference to the world. To-day his own consciousness demanded that he should be clean. Even his old wooden leg received its first baptism, the rite being applied with soft soap and a scrubbing-brush. The hard old oak, polished from long use, shone

like the Di Carlo biscuit-board—and it must be understood that the signora was of the clean sort, unfortunately in the minority among her class.

Pat had just readjusted his peg with new leather straps, when two little black eyes appeared above the stairway.

"Mr. Pat, dey got a colored lady down-stairs what want her shoes mend." It was the boy Pasquale, and he was all the way up now.

"Tell 'er I'm not worrkin' to-day, Pasquale, me b'y. I'm very sick."

"Oh, Mr. Pat, you scared me awful! I thought you was a man up here."

"An' did ye r'a'ly? Sure an' ye made a terrible mishtake, for there's northin' up heer but three-quarrters av an ould divil av a fool."

"Oh, you look awful white, Mr. Pat! You sick fo' true? Mus' I call my maw? Is dey got anybody dead, Mr. Pat?"

Pat's only previous rigorous toilets had been made to attend an occasional funeral of some former comrade.

"Plaze God, there's a fraction of a loafer dead, sonny, an' I'm dthressed for the buryin'. Call nobody, but go now, don't be delayin', and tell the lady below I'm tuck suddintly ill an' I'm not worrkin'."

It was with manifest reluctance that the little fellow at last withdrew his eyes from the gentleman in the attic to deliver his message.

In a moment the signora's voice was heard at the foot of the stairs:

"Oh, Meester Pad! Pasquale say god-a sometheen the matther weeth-a you. 'F you feel-a sig, mus-a shore call-a some*body*."

"Much obliged, ma'am, but sure I'm takin' a day off, jist, an' I'm in nade o' northin' but a broom, if ye'll lind me the loan av one."

Pat was not an artist, and his hands were clumsy, yet the result of a single effort in the direction of respectability wrought a transformation in his apartment. After he had swept, dusted, and rearranged his shabby belongings, he took from his box a little old-fashioned daguerreotype of his mother and gazed upon it in silence for some minutes. When finally he spoke, his voice was tremulous and tender:

"Indade an' yer b'y's in great throuble, mammy dear. Ye always said I was the biggest fool o' the dozen, an' sure I want to take back me sassy conthradiction."

He drew his sleeve clumsily over it, wiping a tear from the face of the picture, and, hobbling across the room, placed it open upon the shelf that served for a mantel.

He did not go down-stairs that day. Though cleansed and clothed, he was not assured of being in his right mind. He dreaded to meet Carlotta, lest she should detect the insanity that possessed him, and despise him as he despised himself for it. Of course this nonsense would die out in time, and he would always be just the same old "Woona" to her as of yore, and when the time and the right man

should come he would do his best to have her suitably married. It was absurd that right here at the outset he should be having trouble with himself.

For three days he felt constrained to put off "till to-morrow" his going down-stairs. While he could not treat with this exquisite, delicate thing without purifications of himself and surroundings, it was yet only a something to be surely overcome. A few days' banishment and fasting would restore him to himself. The fasting, it is true, he practised only because he *could not eat*, and the banishment on a similar principle, yet he counted on this discipline, with time and resolution, to quell a passion which could bring him only ignominy, and to the girl, should she suspect it, but embarrassment and estrangement from her best friend. But she should never know it.

In a few weeks, at furthest, Socola would press his suit; for was there not every reason to expect haste? He was old (old men are always in a hurry), a widower (who ever knew a widower to dally with a proposal?), and he came from Sicily, from Palermo, that warm clime of impatient love and ardent adorers.

In a few weeks Carlotta might have need of a friend. Socola was rich. The Di Carlos' one weakness, in Pat's eyes, was love of money. The signora had laughed when the old man tried to kiss Carlotta. It was a bad omen. She would favor his suit.

It was on the morning of the fourth day that lit-

tle Pasquale reappeared at the head of the stairs, bearing this time in his hands a half-worn shoe.

"Back wud ye, now!" exclaimed Pat, anticipating the application. "Sure an' I'm on the retired lisht for a couple o' days. Fetch me no more ordhers."

"Who's a-talkin' 'bout orders?" drawled the pert boy. "Give a fellow time to talk, won't you? My maw sez, she sez C'lotta's feet's on de groun', and somebody haf to sew 'er shoe."

The old shoe, torn and muddy, which the boy laid in Pat's hand, bearing the unmistakable impress of the physical vigor and undiscriminating step of a growing girl, was neither small nor shapely, but Pat's hand trembled visibly as he touched it, and he felt so queer that he was frightened. He seemed to see Carlotta standing in the flesh before him.

"An' my maw sez, she sez if you'll sew it righd away, 'cause C'lotta ain't got no more shoes, an'—"

"All right. Tell 'er she'll have a new shoe built around the patch I'll putt on it, an'—off wud ye, now."

As the boy disappeared, Pat turned the shoe about in his hands slowly, and, perceiving the trembling of his fingers, exclaimed:

"The divil's grandmother! Sure an' I wouldn't know mesilf from a shakin' Quaker or a quakin' Shaker, I'm that rattled! But I'll kiss the fut av 'er, onyhow!" And he laid the old shoe against his lips with a caressing movement.

It needed many stitches, and Pat was still at work upon it an hour later when he heard the signora trudging up the stairs.

"Hello, Meester Pad; 'm-a come talk weeth-a you," she began, while still invisible. "God-a so much-a troub', haf to spik weeth-a you." And as she finally reached the landing she exclaimed, looking about her, "Name o' God! Well, I swea'! Pasquale ees-a tell me you was-a pud on-a plenny style up here." Crossing, she dropped into a seat at Pat's side, putting the baby which she carried upon the floor before her.

"Fo' God sague! Never was-a seen you so fine-a biffo'. B'lief you goin' a ged-a marry, Meester Pad."

"Arrah, thin, I may's well confess; Carlotta an' me's plannin' to shtep over to S'int Alphonse's some fine morrnin', an' run across to Algiers for a weddin'-tower an' back again be the Frinch Marrket f'r a bridal breakfasht. Sure an' we're only tarryin' for me mother-in-law's perrmission."

This bravado helped him immensely. He had said the same thing substantially a hundred times before, but not for a long time. Instead of laughing as of yore, however, the signora grew serious.

"Dthaz-a just-a fo' wad I'm-a goin'-a talk weeth-a you, Meester Pad. Of-a coze I know you god-a nobody an-a northeen, you haf to mague a lill-a fun some time, but know sometheen? Young gal ligue-a C'lotta ees-a god-a no senz. C'lotta *b'lief thad.* She thing you ees-a lov' weeth-a her."

"An' who sez she does?"

"I am-a sho', *sho'* she b'lief thad."

"An' who sez she does?" he repeated, with keen vehemence.

"Nobody, only 'er*selve* ees-a say it."

"An' who did she say ut to? She niver said it, ma'am!"

"My God, you thing me I'm a liar? C'lotta sez to me, sez I don'-a lov-a no man bud-a just-a Woona. Wad you call-a thad?"

"Begorra, an' I suppose she loves her father betther yet. Who the divil shud she like betther nor me—she that's afther cutt'n' 'er eye-teeth on me thumb-nail?"

"Of-a coze; dthaz-a thrue; bud-a you don' un'erstan', Meester Pad. God-a so much-a troub' weeth-a thad chil'. Now ees-a raise 'er so big, an' she sassy me to my face. God knows, I weesh me I was-a dead! God-a so much-a troub'. Fo' two days, can'd do northeen weeth-a C'lotta. God-a fine chanz, C'lotta, an' she don' care northeen 'boud."

"A fine chance, has she? An' whut is it?" His heart stood still.

"Pietro Socola ees-a wan reech-a man, Meester Pad. *Wan'-a marry weeth-a C'lotta!*"

"The divil's pitchfork! An' whut does—whut does she say?"

"Say she *won'-a* marry weeth-a heem. Can'd do northeen weeth-a C'lotta. Her pa ees-a w'ip 'er, me, I ees-a w'ip 'er, an' the mo' we ees-a beat 'er the mo' she ees-a sassy me to my face."

Pat was speechless with surging emotion, and the mother continued :

"Pietro Socola ees-a prormis me an' Carlo a t'ousan' dollah, an'-a tague 'eem een-a pardners, 'f 'e can-a ged C'lotta. Oh, 'ees-a crazy fo' C'lotta—lov' er so hard."

"An' did 'e shpake love to 'er ?"

"One time 'ees-a try speak weeth-a C'lotta, an' C'lotta ees-a slap 'is face."

"An' whut did he say ?"

"He ees-a just laugh. Lov-a C'lotta so hard 'e don' care. Want 'er all-a same. Theng God fo' thad. Tell you, Meester Pad, plenny troub' een theze-a worl'. Come-a talk weeth you 'boud C'lotta. 'M goin-a call 'er talk weeth-a you. You muz-a please talk-a senz weeth 'er. Tell 'er she haf to marry Socola. C'lotta do anytheen-a fo' you."

Pat was diplomat enough to see the worse than futility of opposition. He let her call Carlotta.

Paler than he had ever seen her, her pallor exaggerating a dark bruise upon her cheek, but with her head erect, she appeared before them.

"Whut ails yer face, Lottie ?" said the man, gently, as, drawing a stool to his side, he motioned to her to be seated.

She remained standing, however, and the mother answered:

"When some*body* slap-a company in-a face, muz-a show 'er how it feel to have-a face slap."

"An' who done ut ?"

"Me myselve done it. Slap 'er face good fo' her! Muz-a teach-a my chil' some manners. Lill-a mo' would-a pud C'lotta's eye oud. Hit 'er good weeth a tin cup. Take plenny pains, yas, teach-a C'lotta manners an-a raise 'er nice."

The tension of the situation here was happily relieved by the signor Di Carlo, who called loudly in Italian for his wife to come and light up the shop. She would have hesitated, but an imperative "*Non posso sestare! Spicciatevi!*" warned her that her lord was impatient.

She rose hastily, slipping her feet deftly from under the child who had crept up against her and fallen asleep, and, bidding Carlotta "min'-a the baby," hurriedly descended the stairs.

The child, disturbed, began to fret. Seating herself, Carlotta raised the little one upon her lap, where in a moment it slept again.

She sat opposite Pat, in the seat her mother had vacated. Sitting thus, with the beautiful babe in her arms, in the tender twilight which was further sensitized by the subtle insinuation of light from a new moon which hung just without, she looked not unlike the statues in the churches of the Virgin Mother and Child.

Even Pat saw it, and felt like crossing himself as he looked upon her.

He had never seen her look like this before. The habitual spirit of joyous childishness had passed out of her face, which seemed clothed with modesty and sadness.

"SHE LOOKED NOT UNLIKE THE STATUES OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER AND CHILD"

She had not spoken since she entered the garret. She had not even looked at Pat.

Though silent also for a time, he was first to speak:

"Well, mavourneen, me poor child o' sorrow, the throuble's come quicker nor I thought for. Betune the two av us, ye've got a black eye, for yer mother only paid ye for takin' me advice. Forgive me me share o' the blame while I talk to ye plain, Lottie."

Raising his eyes, he muttered to himself, "The Lord o' light give me courage this night!" Then he turned to her:

"An' ye must answer me plain, Lottie. Ye must shpake to-night plainer nor ye iver shpoke since yer firrst confession. Answer me questions like the Holy Virgin, whose image ye are, answered the angel o' the Lord, kapin' northin' hid. Wull ye do ut, Lottie?"

She turned and looked at him.

"Wull ye answer me questions an' kape northin' back, mavourneen?"

She gave assent by an inclination of her head, keeping her eyes upon his face.

"'R ye goin' to marry Peter Socola, Lottie?"

She shook her head.

"No? An' why not? D'ye know he has riches an' jew'ls an 'll make a fine lady av ye? I'm kapin' northin' back from ye, an' ye must answer me thrue. D'ye know all that, Lottie?"

"Yas."

"An' ye don't want 'im, nohow?"

"No."

"Not if 'e was tarred wud melted gold an' feathered wud diamonds till 'e'd shine like a government light-house! Ye don't want 'im noway, sick norr well, alive norr dead, raw norr cooked, mummied norr shtuffed, divilled norr on the half-shell! If I'm not mishtaken, I know yer sintimints on the Chinese question, an' that's about the size av ut! Ye don't want Peter, not if he does come wud the golden keys o' the kingdom o' this airth! Ain't that so?"

"Yas."

"Yis whut?"

"I don't want."

"That's it; ye don't want an' *sha'n't have* the antiquated ould pill coated for a sugar-plum! Ye sha'n't have um, an' nayther shall he have you. That much is settled, an' the hows an' the whins an' the wheres come aftherr. An' now for the next question: Is there onybody else ye like?—that ye'd like to marry, I mane?"

She looked straight into his eyes and answered not a word.

How his heart thumped!

"Shpake, Lottie. Out wud ut! Is there onybody else ye like betther nor all the worrld?"

But still she, looking into his eyes, answered not.

He flinched visibly as he put the next question:

"Is it Joe Limongi, Lottie?"

His heart was dancing a highland fling now.

With an almost imperceptible, but steady movement, she shook her head.

It was not Limongi — Limongi who sold cantaloupes for her father and liked to talk to Carlotta. Maybe it was—

"Is it Antonino? Shpake out an' answer me thrue. Is it Toney?"

Another head-shake.

"Norr yer cousin Nicolo? Sure I niver seen 'im shpakin' wud ye."

The Madonna head shook again.

"Arrah, musha, an' sure an' it can't be Pat Murphy, the bit av a grocery-b'y at Keenan's beyant — a freckled, red-headed, blue-eyed Paddy, wud a brogue on 'im as thick as a mush poultice. Sure ye wudn't care for the likes av a blazin' divil av an Irishman, wud ye?"

He waited, but she answered nothing nor moved her head.

He was frightened. His voice was lower when he spoke again:

"In the name o' God, Lottie, answer me, me child. Ye're not demanin' yerself wud love for Pat Murphy, are ye?"

No, it was not Pat Murphy. The head shook now with solemn decision.

"Thin who, in the name o' the Poydras Marrket? I don't know no more a-comin' round heer. Sure it can't be the cross-eyed baker's man wud a crooked—"

It was not the baker's boy, nor yet the young American who lived at the corner.

Pat could think of no other.

"An' fo' the love o' Heaven, is it onybody, Lottie?"

She did not answer. It was surely some one.

"An' does he love ye, me child? An' are ye engaged to um?"

"I don't know." This slowly, after a pause.

"Don't know if ye're engaged? Is it afther makin' a fool av me ye are, Lottie?"

He was wounded. The girl saw it, and was suddenly roused.

"You don't *like* me no more!" she exclaimed, her eyes flashing. "Since two years you never call me no more 'intend'—never say you want me—never, never say *nothing!* I don't care, me. If you want, I'll marry ol' Pietro Socola. Anyhow, he loves me—speak with me kind, an' talk with my maw an' my paw fo' me. An' you—you say nothing! Anybody can come, say love-words an' get me—you don't care! It's all right. Me, I don't care neither, only fo' what you took me when I was little an' know no better, an' speak love-words with me—say I am for you—fool me like that—an' now, now when I am mo' bigger an' know better, now when I know to love, you turn your back! like to see me marry some strange man! My God, if I thought some bad man do like that to my li'l' sister here, me, I'd throw 'er *right now* out the window! Better so than like

me—me to love always one, to think only fo' one, since I am like this baby, an' you pet me, make like you love me, buy me every pretty thing—an' then when I am mo' older, say I am fo' you—call me always your 'intend'—*before my maw an' my paw an' everybody call me so*—an' never in all my life speak no cross word with me—an' now, when I am only for you, an' you know it, *you hate me!*"

"Whist! Sh-h-h!" Pat fairly hissed, raising his arm wildly. "Hush, mavourneen! Ye're shpakin' blasphemy. Hush-h-h! Fo' the love o' God say no more!"

For a moment he was silent. Then, raising hands and face heavenward, he said, reverently:

"Holy Mary, Mother av God, an' all the saints an' angels, pass out in a full-dthress parade this day, an' wutness this mericle in the little shanty on S'int Andthrew Street!"

A sob stopped his throat for a moment, but presently, in a voice pitifully weak and low, he said:

"An' did ye think yer ould 'Woona' turned ag'in' ye, me purrty—he that was kissin' the sole av yer dirrty shoe this minute! Sure I love ye betther nor I love me mother that's in heaven, an' God knows I'm not takin' 'er down a peg from 'er high station in me recollection whin I do be sayin' ut—all honor to 'er name, though she's left me a couple o' shpankin's shorrt in me ginteel education! Sure 'twas the love in me heart that sint me on a retrate from ye, colleen bawn. For two yeers yer name thrimbled on me lips, an' yet I

feered to own the truth, an' since I knowed ut for a fact sure I was afeered to show me face, lest the whole story'd lake out through the pores o' me skin if I kept me lips shut, an' ye'd hate me for a dizzy ould fool. An' now I fale—I fale—my God, I do fale like a pig in a puddle, when somebody t'rown 'im a bookay—sure he ate it up! Fo' the love o' God, gi' me the baby to howld, Lottie, afore I do take ye for a bookay!"

Reaching forward, he actually took the sleeping child from her arms.

"Sure I'll howld 'er for ballast, to kape me from risin' into the air, till I do talk wud ye sinsible! I'm that delerious I'm like a dthrunken man wud the William o' Thrimities! An' did ye think I loved ye since ye were like this to fool ye? Oh, but I must talk wud ye like a major to-night, Lottie." He hesitated, and when he spoke again his voice was touchingly tender:

"Ye're but a child, darlint. I niver thrifled wud ye in me life, an' I won't thrifle wud ye now. Sure an' if I tuck all ye're sayin' to me to-night, an' held ye to ut, all I'd nade 'ud be a pitchfork an' a tail for me rigimintals; but I'm not lookin' fo' that line o' promotion! If I was half or a quarrter fit for ye, I'd thry to qualify the remainder, but wud three-quarrters o' unfitness an' the ither quarrter beyant redimption in a jar o' alcohol, sure I'd be a dog to thry for ye."

"You don't want—"

Her eyes flashed again.

"Sh-h-h! My God, I *do want,* I tell ye, an' from this night for'ard, till he comes that ye like betther nor me, *ye're mine*—promised an' pledged over the head o' this slapin' image o' yerself when firrst ye thricked me ould heart! I'm bound to ye, remimber, Lottie mavourneen, *be me own will, to love ye, to help ye, to fight for ye—to die for ye, the day me grave 'll be a safe bridge over yer throubles!* But ye must be free yet, me purrty little innocent—free till ye've listened to love at its best. The old man Socola can't give ye a sample o' the genu*ine* arrticle, through his empty gums. Sure it's stale an' warrmed over in a cracked oven an' all out o' shape afore ye do get it from him. Let purrty young lips tell the story an' purrty young eyes thry to hide ut from ye in vain. Let one sing ut in rhyme an' anither clinch 'is fists an' swear ut to ye, an' then come an' tell yer ould Woona all about ut. Ye see, ye can't fully undtherstand till ye've had the best lessons in the language, no more nor I c'd polly fronsay wud a Frinchman. Take yer own time, me darlint, an' remimber, whativer comes, *I'm yer intinded!* (I'll say ut, if me ears grow six inches to the minute, to designate ass-ification!) Wull ye thrust me now, an' do what I say, an' kape northin' from me?"

"Yas; but I don't want no French lessons."

"Aha, but sure I insist upon ut!" he replied, laughing heartily at the unconscious humor of her naïve reply.

"Sure an' I've waked the baby wud me thrumpet's voice. Take 'er, darlint, an' go, afore yer mother calls ye, an' if she asks ye, tell 'er I urrged ye to marry ould gum-drops, but ye'll die firrst. If I do show me hand I b'lave she'd put me out; an' I think ye may nade me manœuvrin' more norr a skirrmish. Ye just come down like a thousand o' brick on him an' the whole lot, an' say *ye won't an' nobody can make ye!* An' I'll see ye through ut. Good-night, an' God bless ye. Sh-h-h-h!"

This last was to the baby, who fretted again in the transfer to Carlotta's arms. Placing one of her hands over the other about the shoulders of the sleeping child, Pat laid his lips against them reverently.

"God bless ye—an' God bless ye," he said, and again as she went down the stairs, "God bless ye," and he hobbled back to the open window, sank upon a chair, and in a moment was sobbing —and sobbing.

He felt so old, so dilapidated, so lonely and forlorn, so rough and uncouth, so far removed from his ideal of the man who should dare aspire to the love of Carlotta—Carlotta, whose exquisite youth and vestal beauty stood her in stead of all the graces and refinements of life; and yet he was so madly in love, so deliriously jubilant over her loyalty, which, no matter what should come, was now wholly his, that he wept from a full surrender of himself to his conflicting emotions.

He had sat here an hour, perhaps, when the sound of excited talking below drew him to the head of the stairs. It was the mother's voice. "Ogly!" she was screaming. "Ogly! Fo' God sague, Carlo, list'n ad C'lotta! Sayce Signor Pietro Socola ees-a wan ogly ol' man! Ogly ees-a northeen! Ogly ees-a good fo' wan man, pritty ees-a for a woma'. 'F a man ees-a pritty, ees-a no coun'. 'Z god-a too strong eye fo' pritty, haf to look all-a day een-a glass. Talk aboud-a ogly! My God, loog ad yo' pa! You thing me I ees-a marry heem fo' pritty?"

The voice passed out into the other room. This was only an argument by the way. Pat turned, and, going to his shelf, lit his candle, and, raising his glass, moved it from one angle to another, studying his own face:

"An' I do wondher, fo' the love o' God, does the little darlint think me purrty? Faith an' mebbe I am, but me style is peculiar—a rustic landscape forninst a turrkey-egg background, a mammoth cave, a natural bridge surrounded by a dinse perrarie on fire, wud chips o' snow in among the blazes—throuble on the borrders, but refuge in the middle! An' mebbe that's what the poor child sees in ut!"

The interpretation was touching in its mingling of humor and modesty. The face, while perhaps a stranger to recognized elements of beauty, was yet more than attractive to the observer who cared to read its meanings. Generosity, tender-hearted-

ness, intelligence, wit—can the face on which these are written be called ugly ?

The little blue eyes twinkled anew as he dropped the glass and, fastening a last thread in Carlotta's shoe, hurried down-stairs. There was no longer occasion for retreat, as there was nothing to hide, naught to reveal.

A general murmur of welcome from the family greeted him when he appeared in the shop. Even Socola, who had just come in, grunted a pleasant inquiry as to his health.

"Sure an' I'm convalescent, Misther Socola," he said, his eyes dancing as he turned to the old man with a friendliness entirely new to him. "An' how's yersilf this day o' the wake ?"

"Oh, me, I am-a all-a-way kip well. Feel-a mo' young efera day."

"Droth an' they're all alike," said Pat to himself, as he passed out. "There's northin' like a wife's grave for makin' over ould min. Sure if I'd had the foresight to marry lame Biddy O'Shea afore ould Brindle hooked 'er into purrgatory, I'd be as much too young as I am too ould for love. It takes an ould codger like Socola to shtand sich a h'avin' set-back an' land out av the cradle."

Instead of joining the group at the door this evening, Pat preferred to walk abroad, to get the fresh open air and to find a quiet retreat to think over things.

Hailing a passing car at Jackson street, he rode out to its terminus at the river, and, passing be-

yond the ferry-landing into a shadowy corner behind high piles of freight, he sat down.

In the new retrospect, Socola and his little affair dwindled into utter insignificance as a trivial incident by the way.

He sat here until past midnight, absorbed in his own thoughts, which, no matter which way he turned, seemed punctuated with interrogation-points. "Would Carlotta always love him? Was it fair to her to hope for this? Was it human not to hope? What should he do now?"

The last question was that which remained with him. "What should he do?"

He knew that these revived energies and ambitions that filled him to his finger-tips were not transitory thrills—unless the whole were a dream; and, even so, he would dream out an honorable solution.

If he were really a man worthy a true girl's passing fancy even—to put it safely—and not the "ould granny" as which he had posed to himself for all these years, surely there must be standing-room for him somewhere in the world; not in the rollicking, frolicking world he had left, perhaps, where two feet on which to stand often fail to keep its inhabitants erect, but in the industrial world of workers on the edge of which he had dozed so long.

During the week following, while he worked at his bench in the Di Carlo shop, he was so engrossed with his own schemes that, but dimly

conscious of his surroundings, he saw the old suitor, Socola, come and go, and the young men congregate about the shop and disperse, with but a passing smile. It was only the diverting by-play in his own drama — and Carlotta's — the drama for whose leading part he must equip himself.

Strange to say, the signora had never interrogated him in regard to his interview with Carlotta, presumably in behalf of Socola. The girl's sustained attitude of resistance was evidence enough of its result. So far as Pat observed, the affair was drifting without special incident.

The little father Di Carlo still opened his best old wine for Pietro on Sundays, and the signora made up in attention for whatever was lacking in Carlotta.

So a week passed, during which Pat had had scarcely a private word with the girl.

"Pst! Come heer, Lottie," he called, as she was passing through the shop on Saturday afternoon.

"Sit down an' putt up yer fut till I take yer measure."

She obeyed, coloring as she did so, for she knew the request was only a ruse. Did he not have hanging behind his door a row of lasts made for her feet at every stage of growth from her infancy till now?

"Now," said he, "while I do thrick the inquisitive wud me tape-line, Lottie, I want to talk wud

ye. Don't say northin' to nobody norr let on ye know ut, but I'm goin' off for a thrip for a wake or so. I'll say I'm goin' for me health, but sure it's wealth I'm afther. (Faith an' if I do lie about the firrst letter o' the worrd, I do spind the remainder in repintance.) I'm lookin' out for a betther job norr the exterrnal tratement av corrns an' bunions—poulticin' over wan man's worrk in the corrner av anither man's shop."

"I'm glad," she said, and the rosy color in her face turned to scarlet.

"I knowed ye'd be glad, mavourneen."

"Where you goin'?" She spoke quickly.

"I'm goin' up the Jackson railroad to visit me frind the Dutchman, jist. They tell me he has a boomin' thrade at Chattawa in the shoe business, an' he's only a yeer there, an' sure an' begorra where Hans Schmidt 'll go I'm safe to vinture, for he an' 'is ould frau are but two solid lumps o' prudence."

"When you goin'?"

"I'm off airly o' Monda' morrnin', plaze God, an' look for me back whin ye do heer me peg on the *banquette.* I'm goin' a-scrimmagin' an' a-skirrmishin' till I find what I want—a barefutted town a-wailin' for a wan-legged shoemaker; an'" —lowering his voice—"Lottie mavourneen, be a good girrl till Woona comes back, d'ye heer? An' let no one bully ye into listenin' to the ould man's complaint. Remimber, *nobody can make ye, if ye won't.* If they helt ye up afore the praste, sure

ye cud shtiffen out into a dead faint an' they'd be compelled to carry ye out, *Miss Di Carlo* — an' don't ye forget that."

"I'm not 'fraid. My maw an' my paw knows me. They won't try nothin' like that on me."

"Ye're solid on that, colleen. An' now I'll l'ave me adthress on a shlip o' paper, an' in case ye do nade a friend, sind me a line. *An' now*," —in a louder tone, raising his tape-line — "nine inches an' a quarrter across the inshtep—the same from heel to toe." And lower again, "I seen the madam a-peepin' twice-t; mebbe ye betther run off now—me purrty little intinded."

The last, in a whisper, just reached her ear, spreading a fresh blush over her face as she arose.

III

Pat's business tour extended itself from one to two weeks. The idea of establishing himself in some suburban town was not new to him, but it had never before seemed quite worth while. His really worthy but conservative friends, the Schmidts, though evidently quietly prosperous, were non-committal, and would give no advice. His impressions were favorable, however, and he returned to New Orleans buoyant with promising schemes.

It was after dark when he reached the city, and

as he approached the Di Carlo's a row of carriage-lights before the door startled him so that he felt in danger of falling. Something unusual was happening. If any one had died he would have heard: besides, who ever heard of a night funeral, except under extraordinary circumstances? *Could it be a wedding?* He had had a strange foreboding of ill. Why had he left Carlotta?

Reaching the house, he hesitated without, in the shadow of an open shutter. He must have a moment to still the mad beating of his heart.

The window was up, and through the venetian blinds the scene which greeted him was of the utmost confusion.

Socola, attired in his dress suit and white kid gloves, bloodless as yellow wax and blue of lip, was excitedly walking up and down the room. About him, standing in squads or sitting in groups, whispering, was a gathering of people, among whom Pat recognized some of the Di Carlo kindred, while others were strangers. All were intensely excited.

Just as Socola reached a point near the window, a young woman crossing from the other side of the room stopped him.

Pat recognized her immediately as a cousin of Carlotta, and, by a coincidence, one who bore her full name.

"I'm-a shore I woun'-a grief myself 'boud-a Carlotta, signor," she said, as she excitedly fanned her dark fat face with a light-blue feather fan.

And so Carlotta was dead! Pat leaned against the house for support.

But wait. The old man was answering in Italian:

"Grief! I grieve not for her. She may go to the devil. I care not for her, but for myself! It is the disgrace! I have come here to marry her, and if I wait all night I will have her! Money is nothing to me. I can pay the police—order the detective force out—scour the city."

The girl shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, well, 'z-god-a just-a so good fish in the riv' 'z-a come oud."

"But I am not to be mocked!" The old man was hoarse with passion. There was a majesty in his wrath which might even have won respect from Carlotta could she have seen him.

"She shall not mock me!" he continued. "Every laborer down at the Picayune Tier—every man on the luggers—all my business comrades—*everybody* knows the name of Carlotta Di Carlo, and that I come to marry her to-night. I have her mother's promise. She must be found!"

"Carlotta Di Carlo ees-a no gread-a name," she replied, still in English, toying with her fan. "Z-a my name just-a the same ligue-a my cous'n. Neva ees-a bring me sudge-a so gread-a good-luck." Just here the door opened at Pat's side, and a man stepped out. Fearing discovery, he immediately entered the house, where a chorus of exclamations greeted him:

"Carlotta ees-a run away!"

"Z-a jump oud-a window!"

"—— run off!"

"Cand fine-a no place."

In the back room the mother was noisily bemoaning her misfortune, sometimes in Italian and then in English.

"Come in, fo' God sague, Meester Pad!" she cried, when she saw him. "Come-a see wad-a troub' we god-a theeze day. Come, loog!" Drawing him into the back room, she pointed to the bed, upon which was spread an array of finery.

"Loog—loog here! All-a fine silg dress, silg pock-a-hankcher—silg stockin'—silg hat—keed-a glove—keed-a shoe—gol' watch-a chain—gol' ring—loog! Everytheen-a so fine Signor Socola ees-a bring Carlotta fo' marry weeth-a heem to-nighd—an' C'lotta ees-a *run away!* Sez to me, 'Mus-a lock-a door fo' wash-a myselve'—just a ligue thad—an' ees-a climb oud-a window an' gone! Oh, my God, me I'm-a crezzy!"

"An' had she given her consint, ma'am?" Pat managed to ask, at last. He had only listened yet.

"Consen'! Geev-a consen'! No! Geev-a northeen! C'lotta ees-a god on'y six-a-teen year. Wad-a chil' ligue that knowce aboud-a man? Don' know northeen boud-a consen'!"

"That's whut I say, ma'am!" It was all he could do to hold himself, but he remembered her he loved, and in her interest was silent.

His only fear, and this was slight, was that they should find her.

A half-hour passed slowly. At any unusual sound in the front room every one looked anxiously towards the door, as in a church when the bridal party is due.

Presently a distinct and sudden movement and a renewed hum of voices indicated that something had happened.

It was true. Something was happening.

The old man Socola, leading by the hand the other Carlotta, the cousin, entered the room and approached the bed. With a dignified inclination of his head to the company, and pointing to the display of gifts, he said (he spoke always in Italian):

"I present to Carlotta Di Carlo those presents which are marked in the name of Carlotta Di Carlo, and when she is dressed as my bride we will drive to the church. The announcement in to-morrow's papers shall prove that Pietro Socola has not been disappointed."

Hesitating here, and gathering emphasis by a lowered voice, as he glanced with menacing brow about him, he continued:

"What happens here to-night is in the bosom of Mafia society!" They could have heard a pin drop now. "Mafia's children can keep her secrets." He paused again and looked from one to another. "But if there is a Judas here—*if one word passes that door—the knives of a hundred*

of Mafia's sons are ready to avenge it! And I am Pietro Jesus Adolpho Socola who speaks!"

Pat was the first to break the death-like silence which followed.

"An' accept me warrmest congratulations, Misther Socola," he said, stepping forward and grasping the old man's white-gloved hand.

Others followed closely. Congratulations were now in order, the new bride-elect receiving her accidental honors with ill-concealed pride.

A fresh wedding-stir arose, but beneath it all was a suppressed moan, like the irresistible undertow of a playful sea. The missing girl, the lost wealth, the mystery, the humiliation, Mafia's authoritative command of secrecy, with its death-penalty—all these, as elements of possible tragedy, were felt, even by the satellites of the new bride, and showed themselves in the subdued air and blanched faces of the family of the supplanted.

Pat was the happiest person present, excepting perhaps the fat little creature who in the next room was holding her breath and panting while one squeezed, another fanned her, and a third burst off hooks and eyes in the determined effort to prove that the bridal gown designed for Carlotta Di Carlo had not proved a misfit.

It was a relief to all when finally the wedding-party started off.

Those who came in the back carriages rode now in front, the family of Carlo Di Carlo bringing up the rear as relations of the bride—"like

the asses which always follow on the tail of the Rex procession on Mardi Gras," Pat heard the little father say in Italian to the signora, adding, as he and his sons got into the last carriage, "You have made us a pretty pack of fools !"

There was that in the husband's tone that made the wife keep silent, but when they had gone she turned to Pat and burst into violent weeping.

For once a woman's tears were powerless to move him. Turning abruptly, he left her without a word, and mounted the stairs to his own room.

In a moment, however, he heard her following. She was not to be so easily eluded. She must have an audience. Her habit of finding relief by pouring her complaint into Pat's ears was too firmly fixed to be given up at this crisis, when her ignominious failure seemed more than she could bear. Her cup had been spared no possible dreg of bitterness, even to the summoning of the hated family of her brother-in-law Di Carlo to witness and reap a triumph in her defeat. This was the refinement of cruelty ; and then, as a finishing-touch, came Mafia's command. They dare never explain. Those stuck-up Toney Di Carlos might give the world any story they chose *but the true one*—the one they would love to keep.

When she appeared before him, panting from her hasty ascent, Pat thought she resembled nothing so much as a hyena at bay.

"*Haf to lis'n ad me*, Meester Pad," she began,

dropping into a chair. "God Almighty ees-a turn 'is back on me to-nighd—pud-a me down ligue wan dog biffore all-a doze nasty Toney Di Carlos!"

"God Almighty done ut, d'ye say? Ye're payin' yersilf a purrty round complimint for a wake-day, Misthress Di Carlo! I'd kape that for a Sunday, till we cud buy ye a tin halo an' putt on our Sunday clothes an' say our beads to yer Holiness."

His wrath oiled his tongue. Of course she did not understand.

"'Z-a no time fo' play, Meester Pad. Fo' God sague, you god-a no heart? See wan-a poor woma' in-a so gread-a troub'!"

"I have, ma'am, a palpitator in the vicinity o' me left lung, but it's engaged at prisent in behalf o' the slip av a child that's turrned out av 'er father's house on a darrk night to escape worrse nor a livin' death at the hand av 'er mother. 'Tis a black night, ma'am, an' where is the child?"

"My God!" her whisper was heavy with passion, "you tague-a side weeth-a C'lotta? Me, I don' care where ees! Hofe-a the dev's got 'er!"

"An' I'll warrant ye, ma'am, he has an orrganized detective forrce out in searrch o' the likes av her to-night, ye may be sure o' that! An' plinty illuminated transums above hell's skyparrlors 'll open their thrap-doors to welcome 'er in, wud music borrowed from heaven to entrap an angel!" His voice trembled with wrath. "Sure

they'll give 'er 'er pick av bridal dresses, an' a sate at a faste where the bread she'll ate 'll be as honest as that ye offered 'er—raised from the same leaven an' at the same price !"

"Wad you talk, Meester Pad? 'Brida' dress' an'-a same price !' Thing yo' head ees-a gone wrong ! 'Z no mo' rich-a man's wan'-a C'lotta. Wad-a you say ?"

"I say the divil has a shtandin' ordther out for brides, ma'am, an' the city strates av a darrk night are his harvest-field, an' whin an angel is thrapped unbeknowinst to his bed, he does mock heaven wud fresh fireworrks an' ring the bells o' hell for a holiday ! 'Tis tin o'clock, mother Di Carlo, an' rainin' cats an' dogs this minute. Ye have a child, a fair bit av a daughter, out hidin' from ye. She knows no people. 'Tis the firrst time nine o'clock iver missed 'er from her little thrundle-bed. Can ye tell me in whose back alley I'll find 'er skulkin', like an odd cat, an' bring 'er home to the mother that's grievin' after 'er ?"

His passion calmed the woman. She looked dazed, but answered him nothing.

"If yer Divinity 'll parrdon me shirrt-slaves till I do putt on me rain-coat, I'll shtep out mesilf an' see if bechance her ould granny can thrace 'er."

Crossing the room, he proceeded to raise the lid of his trunk, but it resisted. It was fastened —*on the inside !*

For a second only voice and wit failed him.

"Ye'll excuse me manners, ma'am, fer lavin' me saloon-parrlor whin I've company, but I've a call to enlist on the opposition to the divil's forrce," he said, and, with a bow, "Wull ye walk firrst, Misthress Di Carlo?"

Sniffling, but silent, the woman arose and preceded him down the stairs.

Following, he hurried into the street, but returned in a moment.

"Betther go back for me rubber boot an' me bumberel," said he. "Sure the strates are flowin' wud wather." And hastily he reascended the stairs.

"Whst!" he called, tapping gently upon the trunk, and "sh-h-h!" as the girl's head pushed up the lid.

"Glory be to God Almighty!" he whispered, as he carefully aided her to rise from her cramped position, though she remained sitting in the trunk.

"An' did me ould box harber ye again, me little wan? An' why didn't ye write me the letther?"

"I never knowed I haf to get married till tonight. My maw sez to me I mus' marry Socola, on 'coun' o' my po' lill brothers an' sisters an'—"

"Sh-h! Spake aisy, mavourneen."

"Then I seen my only chance was to run away. It was dark outside. I was afraid. So then I thought about the trunk, an' I climbed up over the back shed—"

"Niver mind now, darlint. I musht go; the

madam 'll be afther missin' me. But you stay heer. Make yersilf at home to-night in me ould din. I'll shlape below in the shop, an' tell thim I'm on the watch for ye, which 'll be God's truth. Ye're not to make yer appeerance till she's wapin' an wailin' for a sight av ye. Shtrike no light, an' off wud yer shoes. I'll manœuvre below-stairs, an' ye kape silence above."

"You think the old man 'll come back for me to-morrow again?" she asked, anxiously.

"Heavens above! An' didn't ye know he's married to yer cousin Carlotta?"

The tension had been so great that, at this sudden relief, the girl, trembling, bent her head upon her arm over the edge of the trunk, and fell to sobbing hysterically.

Pat was frightened lest she should be overheard, for he dreaded the mother's unspent rage. He laid his hand tenderly upon her head.

"Sh-h! The throuble's over now, darlint, an' Woona's heer to thrash onybody but yer mother, an' it's she that mustn't heer ye!"

A sound of loud talking below reassured him, however. The father and brothers had returned from the wedding.

Carlotta heard it, and the distraction soon quieted her. With Pat's aid she presently arose, and together they cautiously approached the opening.

In the tumult the father's voice prevailed. He spoke in Italian:

"What am I, that my wife *lies* to me? You

said the child consented. You lied, *lied!* I told you you should not compel her. You are paid. I am glad. But I want my daughter. Where is the child? What can I do? Where I go to seek her I spread an ugly tale — Carlotta, the pretty daughter of Di Carlo, is not in her father's house at night. A sweet story, that! Oh, my wife is a fine schemer — got a rich husband for Toney's ugly girl with the pimply face. Ha! she is kind, yes—I am glad, but, only, I want my little girl."

In the midst of this, but not heeding it, the woman was contesting her position in broken English — an appeal for sympathy to the English-speaking boys, her sons.

"Fo' who ees I lie?" she screamed, between sobs. "Wad ees-a money fo' me? Rich or po' ees-a all-a same to me. God-a rock-a cradle fo' you—dthaz all! 'F I lie, 'z fo' you, an' fo' C'lotta selve. An' now everybody ees-a blame me! Weesh, me, I was dead. You ees-a curse me, Meester Pad ees-a sassy me to my face, an' all on 'coun' o' C'lotta!"

"Shp!" hissed the old man. "No more! Show me my child, and we speak never of this again. I am not blameless. I consented, but not to force her. You were tempted, and she saved you. It is well. We have not sold our first babe to feed the last. But I want her here. I want my little girl."

"I'm goin', Woona," said Carlotta, starting sud-

denly. She would have descended the stairs, but Pat held her arm.

"Not from heer, darlint. Ye've kept the thrunk secret for a dozen years—"

She understood, and, agile as a cat, had dashed by him in the other direction, and was out the window on the roof before he realized her intention. She would return as she had come.

Pat hobbled after her to the window. She had just reached the corner of the low shed (where an' overhanging fig-tree afforded safe and private transit to the ground), when she suddenly returned and laid her hand on the Irishman's arm.

"Don't be mad. You are good. I like you, Woona, but I never knowed—"

She began to cry.

"I never knowed my paw liked me before ; haf to go to him."

Pat was choked with emotion, and before he could answer her the slim shadow of the girl had flitted down, and was merged into the broad shadow of the tree.

Though the rain was over, the night was dark.

Pat's heart was thumping so when he returned to his vantage-ground at the head of the stairs that he had to sit down.

Soon he heard a timid knock at the street door — Carlotta was a cute one — then a rush of boys' heavy feet, a clank of iron as the hook was raised, and now, through the open door, loud crying, like

the heart-sobs of a little child. So Carlotta met her father.

By ducking his head very low, Pat saw, for a second only, the little reticent old man with outstretched arms going to meet her ; and he, sitting alone on the top step, blubbered like a school-boy, but no one heard him.

Pat could scarcely realize that he had been home hardly three hours when, a few minutes later, he looked at his watch to find it but eleven o'clock.

So far as he could discover, the affair was never alluded to in the household afterwards ; but for a long time between himself and the signora a distinct coldness was felt which made him uncomfortable.

His anger towards her had soon melted, but he wanted it forgotten. She was no worse than many rich mothers. Her methods were only a little more crude.

He had easily forgiven her, since she had failed. Though she had had no conception of the force of his words, she realized that he had blamed and silenced her—had "sassied her to her face"—and it was hard to forget it. And then, too, her relations were somewhat embarrassed with all who knew of the affair.

"I wonder," said he one evening a few weeks later, as he sat near her at the door—"I wonder wud the madam wear a pair o' shoes o' my makin'? I'll guarantee I cud make ye a bully pair 'll do ye

through the next christenin', an' ye'll be dthraggin' 'em slip-shod till the wan afther that ag'in."

"Oh, you ees-a so bad, Meester Pad!" she exclaimed, with a hearty laugh delightfully like the familiar ring of old times. "How much-a price you goin'-a charge me?"

"Charrge ye! Well, I'll be dog-goned if ye're not complimintary! I'll charrge ye enough, sure, whin ye do bring me yer ordher for a pair, but whin I do make ye a presint I'll ask ye a returrn o' what I do putt into the job—a free confession o' frindly feelin', jist. Whut do ye say, ma'am?"

Laughing, she stuck out her heavy foot. "'Z big 'nough speak fo' heemselve!"

And so the old relations were restored.

Pat had been especially desirous of this reconciliation because of his contemplated change of residence, which of course the signora did not suspect.

Exactly what arrangement would result from his reconnoitring tour he did not yet know, but the matter was unexpectedly decided one day by the receipt of a formal business proposal of partnership with his German friend, Hans Schmidt.

The old fellow was growing decrepit, and wished to rest. The offer was framed with characteristic caution, and its terms were hard, but in his present mood Pat was all the better pleased, and so the matter was settled.

He would still call the Di Carlo garret "home," and would come on Sunday mornings and stay

until Monday. Chattawa was but a few hours' run from the city.

All the signora's sentiments towards him were sensitized and perfumed with the generous odor of fresh shoe-leather when Pat told her of his plans, and she said so many touching things about breaking up the family, and the like, that he added forgetfulness to his forgiveness of her sin, and they almost wept upon each other's bosoms when he went away.

IV

Time dragged rather heavily at the Di Carlos' after Pat's departure. There was no one now always ready to give a humorous turn to commonplace things—to raise a playful breeze over the dull monotony of every-day life. Whether the baby bumped her head or a customer quarrelled over his bill, the occurrence, served up with Pat's piquant wit, had always become a delightful joke.

It is possible that not even Carlotta missed him more than did the signora. And the little family toes missed him! Dainty pink buttons that had not been allowed to see the light came all the way out, as if to inquire for the absent Pat, and grew familiar with the floor and the *banquette*, like other little dago children's toes. And yet the signora vowed that she had done nothing but pay out

money for shoe-patching ever since Mr. Pat went away.

In the evenings the young men and boys still came and laughed and talked with Carlotta.

At first there had been inquisitive glances with occasional expressions of surprise at Socola's marriage to the other, but the mother's flat and surprised denial of her Carlotta's ever having been thought of in so absurd a connection soon silenced all concern about the matter.

Pat came usually on Saturday night or Sunday, and was always an honored guest. "The madam" never tired of rehearsing to him the events of the week or exhibiting the baby's last tooth or promising gums, nor did she ever fail to hold out for his inspection "the mos'-a easy-walkin' pai' shoe ees-a ever was-a wear."

And so weeks lapped over weeks until months had passed and folded likewise one upon the other.

Carlotta was still to her fond old lover a dainty little saint within a high niche, and when he said his "Hail Mary" at night, as he had tried to do ever since he had confessed himself in love, he kept seeing *her* picture sitting in the garret window in the moonlight, and wondering how far his piety was at fault. Even irreligious men say prayers when they are honestly and purely in love. Pat was only unreligious.

He still told himself, as he told her, that she was free, and must listen untrammelled to any story of love that should please her; and yet,

when he laid by small sums of money, he thought, "How purrty it'll shtuff out 'er little pockut-book!" or, "I wondher wull she lave ut in a dhry-goods shop or hide ut in an ould shtockun'!—but, savin' or shpindin', sure she'll be handlin' 'er own, God bless her."

He expected to find young men sitting around the shop in the evenings when he came home, and the sound of an accordion or flute or tambourine or familiar laughter reaching him, as he approached the house, served but to identify the crowd.

It was only when the accordion became his invariable greeting, when, even descending upon the family in the middle of the week, he found it still there, that he began to consider that Carlotta had never told him about this young musician, except to give his name in answer to a question.

It seemed absurd to think seriously of so trivial a matter; and yet, when a long time passed and the accordion, long-winded or short of breath according to the player's mood, sent its voice out panting or trilling to meet him, he began to hate the sound of it, and to wish that Carlotta would sometimes talk upon the subject.

She had told him how young Alessandro Soconneti, who won a prize in the lottery, had wanted her, and how Joe Zucca, the peanut-vender, had vainly insisted on her love, and even of her cousin Angelo, who had tried to coax her to forget his kinship. Why had she forgotten to mention this strange boy who played the accordion?

Pat seldom saw her alone now excepting when occasionally on Sunday afternoons he would take her with the children for a ride up to the park, as had been his habit for years. While the little ones played under the oaks or braided clover wreaths near, he would sit at her feet on the gnarled roots of the old trees and tell her about his life at "the Dutchman's," and sometimes, though not often, he would speak of how he had missed her out of his daily life.

He avoided this as much as possible, however. It was so hard to be a little tender when in his Irish heart was smouldering a fire that at the lightest breath would flare into a flame.

He had promised himself and her to wait until she should pass her eighteenth year before allowing her to bind herself by solemn promise.

She knew that he loved her—that he was working early and late, living with people who were in touch with him only in their determination to make money—and that it was all for her.

Sometimes, growing weary of his silence, she would invite a declaration by some naïve question put in monosyllables, as when she said, one Sunday, as they rose to start home:

"You like me yet, Woona?"

"Like ye yet! Arrah, musha, an' whut 're ye sayin', darlint? *Like* ye? Sure I *love* ye, from the crown av yer purrty little black head to the sole av yer two feet, an' all the way back, wud a lap over! An' why d'ye ask me that?"

But instead of answering him, she only colored like a rose, and said:

"I'm glad."

And Pat, lifting the children into the car, felt like kicking his wooden leg to the winds and flying; but he only said, as he sat beside her:

"Begad, an' I'm glad ye're glad, mavourneen. Sure sorrow 'll dim my day whin ye're sorry." And as he raised his eyes he saw, sitting opposite, a young man who smiled and tipped his hat to Carlotta—and under his arm he carried an accordion.

As he looked upon him, Pat felt a shiver pass over him, for he thought he had never seen a youth so beautiful as he.

"That's Giuseppe Rubino," said Carlotta, looking into his eyes with the directness of a child.

"Is it, indade? Sure I tuck 'im for a vision of S'int Joseph or wan av the angels. An' isn't he a beauty?"

"He sings pritty," replied the girl, as she might have said, "It is growing cold," or, "The river is rising."

Pat regarded her with covert scrutiny for a moment. Could it be possible that she did not see that this tall brown boy, with his soft red lips and white teeth, his lofty movement and languid grace, was a creature of rare and poetic beauty?

Had she too not seen the red deepen beneath the olive of his cheek when his eye met hers? Had she not learned in all the summer evenings

what Pat had caught in a twinkling — that the youth loved her with all the fresh ardor of a nature fashioned for romance?

It seemed not; for she remarked, in the same even tone:

"He comes ev'ry evenin' pass the time away. He plays nice."

If she had been saying she hated the boy, it would not have kept Pat's heart from thumping against his waiscoat while his eyes rested on the beautiful youth who was helping the girl he loved to "pass the time away" during his absence.

"An' whut does he do for a livin'? Sure there's little money in the machine he carries, wud all its puffin' an' blowun'."

"He's pore. He works fo' ol' Socola. He hates him, too. He's savin' up. Bimeby he's goin' to start for 'isself."

"An' who told ye all that, Lottie?"

"He tol' me."

"An' where did ye meet um?"

"He come to fetch my paw a note from ol' Socola. He say he seen me first in his sleep one night. He talks funny. I don' pay no 'tention."

It was time to stop the car; but before Pat could do so the young man had pulled the strap and was going out.

"Please to make you 'quainted wid Mister Rubino, Mister Rooney," said Carlotta, as Giuseppe, smiling, joined them, and the three, Carlotta in the middle, followed the children home.

"AND THE THREE FOLLOWED THE CHILDREN HOME"

If Pat appeared at a disadvantage, no one was half so conscious of it as himself as he hobbled beside the youthful pair on his wooden peg.

Ever since he had loved the girl, he had been keenly sensitive in regard to his lameness. Indeed, he had even once gone so far as to try to repair it by wearing an artificial leg, but, as Carlotta had shrunk away from it as something uncanny, declaring that it "made her think about dead people," he had discarded it after a single experiment.

It seemed but natural that Pat should sit with "the old folks" while Carlotta and the youth joined the young group at the other door to-night; it was quite natural that Giuseppe should presently be playing the accordion for the crowd—the same thing had happened before, many a time; and yet to-night Pat felt it all as he had never done before.

"A fine-lookin' chap is this young man Rubino," he said, presently, to the signora.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"And who is 'e?" he pursued.

"Carlo sayce ees-a wan good steady young man; bud me, I know northeen 'boud who ees-a keep-a comp'ny weeth-a C'lotta." And the shoulders shrugged again, a movement so distinctly reminiscent of the previous affair that Pat thought it discreet to change the subject.

As the evening wore on, he grew restless.

"Well, I b'lave I'll thry a promenade for me

complexion," said he, rising finally. "Sure me right fut is itchin' for a walk." And, with this characteristic allusion to the missing member, he started down the street. He had not gone far, however, when he came upon a crowd of young men, Italians most of them, sitting upon the steps outside the closed doors of a shop — a common Sunday-evening congregation — and, as a familiar voice accosted him, he had soon seated himself with them.

Several of the *habitués* of the Di Carlo shop were present, and were bantering one another in Italian about Carlotta. Pat was not supposed to understand.

All went smoothly for a time, until young Tramonetti, an ugly, heavily-set fellow who had been the target of several sallies on the score of his well-known unsuccessful suit, suddenly turned in anger.

"I could marry her to-morrow if I had money!" he exclaimed, with a sneer.

"Psh-h-h! You'd have to get a new face on you first!" came a quick retort.

"I think my face is just as pretty as old Pietro Socola's; and she tried hard enough to get him, all the same!"

"You better say he tried for her, yes," was the reply.

Pat, although talking quietly aside, caught and understood every word.

"Tried nothing!" continued Tramonetti. "He

never wanted her. Married her rich cousin, yes ! But Carlotta tried pretty hard to get him. Myself saw her every minute pass before him in the shop and make sheep's-eyes !"

Pat could stand no more.

"An' I say ye're a liur!" he exclaimed, rising and facing the speaker.

The effect of his words was magical. A stillness fell upon the assembly. After an interval, an old man, Tramonetti's uncle, broke the silence.

"Wath-a you knowce 'bouth ?" he asked, turning languidly to the Irishman with that apathetic manner beneath which anything may lurk.

"Sure an' I do jist happen accidintally to know that that young man is a liur !"

The object of his accusation quietly lit a cigarette.

"How ees-a you knowce ? Socola selve ees-a tell evera-body neva ees-a lov'-a tall. Wath-a you knowce ?"

And now another spoke—a cousin of Tramonetti.

"Socola ees-a tell all-a mans on Picayune Tier she ees-a try for 'eem all-a same."

Grunts of assent in several directions testified that the story was familiar.

"An' he's another liur, an' I'd tell ut to 'is gums, the toothless ould macaroni-sucker ! Sure an' I've had me two eers pricked for this same lie this twelvemonth, an', bedad, I've laid low an' kep' shtill for ut! An' did 'e say she thried to catch

'im—the contimptible little river shrimp—he that had 'is two eyes set out like yung telescopes afther 'er!"

"Fo' God sague, don'-a mague-a no troub'! Blief Socola ees-a just talk fo' play!" suggested another.

"Thin I'm playin' when I tell ye that he thried wud all the iloquent perrsuasion av his money-bags to buy 'er!—offered the ould man a thousand dollars down for 'er, an' pitched 'imself in at the end o' the thrade, like a punkin-colored chromo for *lagniappe;* but the girrl—sure I do raise me hat whin I do sphake 'er name"—every hat followed as he lifted his own—"but the girrl wudn't look ut um! An' the night he married 'er pug-nosed cousin, sure he kem in the kerridge wud all 'is crowd for 'erself, an' she shkipped out the window an' hid. So whin he cudn't get corrn 'e took shucks, as mony o' ye 'll do afther 'im! Now, putt that in yer pipe an' shmoke ut!"

He turned now again to Tramonetti.

"An' this yung gas-chandelier heer, who sez 'e seen 'er wink at 'im, is a dirrty black—"

"Ah-h-h-h! Ged oud! 'M just a mague a lill-a fun!" drawled the boy.

"An' ye take ut back, wul ye?"

The men were all laughing now at the new version of the Socola marriage.

"So the ol' man got fooled, eh?" said one.

"But I say, d'ye take ut back?" persisted Pat.

"Ain't I sayce was-a play'n'? Fo' God sague,

how much-a mo' you wan'?" And he rose to go.

The storm was past, and by twos and threes the men dispersed, laughing and talking as they went.

As Pat moved away, an old man who had sat apart in the shadow stood up, and the light from the gas at the corner fell upon a visage sinister, one-eyed, and lowering.

Pat instantly recognized it as the face of a man who had been present at the Di Carlos' on the night of the Socola wedding. Indeed, it was he who had been sent to Pat as interpreter, on this occasion, of the Mafia anathema. Pat thought of this, but he did not care.

As he turned his back, another man arose out of the shadow at the other end of the shed. He too had been a guest at the wedding.

The two Sicilians, who were presently left alone, regarded each other in silence for a moment, when the last to rise made the sign of the Mafia. The answering motion was given, and the two, still silent, sat down together again in the shadow.

They were bound by oath to report this disclosure to Socola, and they knew what the inevitable result would be: the Irishman's words would prove his death-sentence.

Under the vow of perfect obedience, either or both of them might become the executors of an old man's personal vengeance.

It was an ugly business, and neither of the men

welcomed it. Both knew Pat's cordial relations with many of their countrymen, among whom, indeed, he had not a single enemy. Even the old man Socola liked him. But they understood too well the imperious pride of the vindictive old Sicilian to hope that a personal friendship, or even a tie of blood, would protect any man who dared betray his dignity. Certainly the casual feeling of negative good-will which he felt towards Pat would melt like snow beneath the hot breath of his wrath when he should learn that the Irishman had given his secret to the common herd of his countrymen. The indomitable pride which had led him to marry an ugly, unattractive woman the first time he met her, rather than brook the odium of a disclosure of his rejection, would not spare him who, although forewarned, had dared divulge it.

It was some moments before either of the men spoke, and then one said, in Italian :

" Well—"

" Well—" was the answer. And, after a pause:

" I wish I had gone home to-night."

" And me too. I wish I had stayed at the coffee-house."

" He's a good friend to all the Carlo Di Carlos, that old Irishman."

" Yes, I know. Last year, when all the babies took the small-pox and the shop was shut up, he signed for the rent ; and he paid every cent since—three months' rent."

"Yes, and old Di Carlo says Carlotta's schooling never cost him a dollar. This cripple paid it all."

"And when the old man was stung with a tarantula hidden in a bunch of bananas, while everybody cried and ran every way, they say the shoemaker threw his hat on the spider and sat on it quick, while he took little Di Carlo across his knee like a baby and sucked the poison from the back of his neck. Di Carlo was carrying the bananas on his shoulder when the little devil stung him."

"Yes, I heard that. And all the people laughed while they cried, because when he was sucking the poison he said, 'Let me kiss you for your mother.'"

They were silent again for a time.

"If Tramonetti had only kept his big mouth shut—"

"Yes, I wish he had choked before he spoke to-night. He made all the trouble."

Another silence.

"Well—"

"Well—"

"It's a bad world, this. One minute we play an organ at the corner for any beggar to dance, the next minute maybe we get orders to file our stilettos and put on a black mask."

"Me, I am tired. I wish I was out of it."

"And me too. Tell the truth, I've never been the same since that job you and I did at the old

Basin. I see, a thousand times a day, that young man's face the way it looked in the moonlight. Sometimes I am playing my organ laughing, and he comes and stands before me with his neck *so.* And, I swear before God, I believe the monkey sees him. Many times when he is dancing he looks up and runs and crawls behind me, crying, and I look around, and I see the young man with his neck cut. I kiss the cross, but it's true. Four times last week Jocko did that, and I trembled so I missed the time in my music. You don't believe it's true?"

"Yes, I believe you. I've seen them again, too. But now they are too many. They don't frighten me. I laugh in their faces, and they dance and run one through another, like clouds of smoke. I am an old man, and I have struck many a blow, but not one for hate, thank God—only obedience."

"Nor me neither. Only twice I have been on duty. Once my partner did the work, and the other time—you know. And now, my God! if I have to listen all my life to that Irishman's wooden leg, '*tap, tap, tap,*' in my ears, I'll go crazy; I'll drown myself."

The other man laughed.

"Oh, don't hurt yourself. Maybe old Socola 'll put somebody else on this job. And the next time that young fellow we finished at the Basin comes fooling around you, showing you the cut in his neck, you send him to me. I believe I gave

him his send-off, anyway. 'Twas good enough for him. His tongue was too long."

"No, no! They know whom to follow—and *I know.* I am left-handed, and the hole in his neck was *here;* and sometimes my left hand burns like hell. You can laugh," he continued, rising, "but it is no fun to me. But I am not a teething baby. Easy or hard, I am good for my duty."

"Well," said the other, "*dimani*" (to-morrow).

"*Dimani*," was the answer.

And so they parted.

As the younger man walked away, the older sighed.

"Poor boy!" (he spoke still in Italian), "I was like him too, once. The first drop of blood on a man's hand burns like a coal of fire, and a ghost stands beside it always, blowing upon it to keep it burning. The only relief is more blood. When once he is bathed in blood he burns the same all over, and he knows himself for a devil, and the air of hell feels good to him. All around him are ghosts blowing upon him, and he likes their breath and laughs because he is solid fire and they are like a roaring wind around him. If they would go and leave him to cool he would go all to gray ashes and fall to pieces. He would go crazy and kill himself. Anyhow, I am sorry for this business."

He rose, and, as he started home, curiosity led him somewhat out of his way to pass the Di

Carlo shop. He walked on the other side of the street. He looked over.

Pat stood among the children on the *banquette*, throwing a little one into the air and catching her, while the others stood waiting and begging:

"Take me, Mr. Pat!"

"Teresa had four turns."

"Little Pat always gets the most."

It was a pretty picture.

"Well, I'm sorry," the man repeated to himself as he passed on. "In the name of God, why can't men keep their tongues? But, anyhow, I am sorry."

The picture of the amiable man in the bosom of the family of his countryman playing with his children, unconscious of impending evil, remained with the Sicilian as he walked home. Indeed, Pat's offence seemed to him more than half a virtue; for was it not provoked by his stanch championship of the young Italian girl, Carlotta?

If only Socola would be made to see it in this light!

Before reporting the case, even, this man of the sinister face, who had never before troubled himself with a personal concern for his victims, summoned his best English and wrote a word of warning to the Irishman.

It ran about like this:

"Mr. Rooney at Carlo Di Carlo,—This warn you to run for your life. Leaf New Orleans rite

way. It is not in power off man to safe you neither God if you remane before the eye of Mafia.

"One man's spite it is whitch marc you to die. If you remaine a nife go throught your heart. It is true. I swear before God."

When he passed through the shop early Monday morning on his way home, Pat found this note with another slipped in beneath the edge of the front door.

The other was shorter, but, as if to add weight and solemnity to its almost affectionate warning, across the top of the sheet were written the words "Jesus, Mary, Joseph."

Both notes were unsigned. Pat read them hastily, and, chuckling, as he slipped them into his pocket, started out.

He had proceeded but a few steps, however, when he suddenly hesitated, took off his hat, scratched his head for a moment, and, turning, went back into the house.

Five minutes' reflection had sufficed to decide him as to what he should do.

V

It was two hours later when Pat started out again, and this time he went directly down to the fruit-shop of Pietro Socola, where a most unexpected and festive scene greeted him.

The little old man, surrounded by a dozen or more of his countrymen (and others were coming and going), was opening bottles of wine and drinking freely.

As Pat entered, Socola bowed delightedly, and, filling a glass, presented it to him.

Everybody was laughing and drinking, and the host, although it was yet scarce ten o'clock in the morning, showed the effect of many glasses in his flushed face and hilarious spirits.

Not understanding in the least, but unable to resist so social a spirit, Pat, at the signal, raised the glass to his lips. It was only when some one pronounced the name "Pietro Socola Junio" that the situation flashed upon his comprehension.

Unto the house of Socola a son had been born.

The last time Pat had met the old man, a year before, the night of his wedding, he had grasped his hand in congratulation, and he did so again now.

"Accept me congratulations, Misther Socola," he exclaimed; and, with a twinkle in his eye, raising his glass again, "Heer's luck to the junior partner in the future firrm av Socola an' Son. May he niver cross 'is father an' niver boss 'is mother, an' be a shinin' example to all 'is yunger brothers an' sisters!"

Hearty laughter greeted this toast, and the old man insisted on refilling the glasses all round, saying, in Italian, to the men as he did so, "He has come a great distance to wish me joy. Keep his glass full."

Socola was not a heavy drinker, and his voice was already growing unsteady.

While they stood here, the one-eyed man whom Pat had recognized in the shadow the night before joined the group. He winced visibly, Pat thought, on perceiving him in this crowd, and while he and Socola touched glasses, Pat withdrew, and, joining some of the men whom he knew, walked out upon the levee.

When he returned, an hour later, he glanced into Socola's shop. The hitherto childless old man, translated by his tardy honors into a state of gleeful irresponsibility, had by this time gotten right royally drunk, and now some friends were trying to induce him to go home.

Pat laughed to himself as he saw him stagger up to the carriage door. "Arrah, musha!" he exclaimed, "sure an' it's a holy thing to be a father! Faith an' he waddles like a puddledthrake on a hatchin' day! I hope the young duck 'll be big enough to crowd murdher out av the ould dthrake's heart, if ut's in ut."

The truth was, Pat had gone down to Socola to propose that they confess themselves mutually aggrieved, and proceed to settle the matter at once by a square hand-to-hand fist-fight.

He had withheld the facts about the wedding until Socola had first lied about it. He was willing to fight for the truth. If Socola wanted to fight for the lie, let him come and "have it out" then and there; or if the old man preferred to

have a subordinate member of the Mafia to represent him in the affair, let him send any one of them to him.

It was only as a vague intangibility that Pat objected to deal with the Mafia.

He was sure that as soon as Socola should see that all he demanded was a "fair showing" they could come to a satisfactory understanding: so little did he comprehend the nature of the man with whom he had to deal, or the character of the organization which threatened him.

As he surmised, Socola had not yet even heard of his offence. The two men who went to make their reports were, like himself, treated to wine, and saw their host carried home *hors de combat.*

As Pat hesitated at Socola's door, the one-eyed man was coming out, and they met, face to face.

Pat touched his hat. The Sicilian responded by a like salutation, and would have passed on, but Pat detained him:

"Shtop a bit, Misther ——; sure, I don't know yer name, but whilst no one's by I'd like to thank ye for the bit of a love-letther ye sint me last night."

The man shrugged his shoulders. "Loaf-a-letther?" he asked, with inimitable blandness. "Me, I no write-a northeen."

"Mebbe ye don't call it a love-letther itself. Now I do think again, I belave it's not a heart wud a dart run through ut for a bookay at the top o' the sheet, but a couple o' shin-bones for-

ninst a graveyard photograph wud a company shmile on 'im. But sure what's left out av the crest is indicated in the text. Ye've hinted purty clear at the piercin' o' me palpitator at the end o' the po'm."

Fumbling in his pocket, he now brought out the two letters.

"Pity ye cudn't get ould Socola to set for a Cupid aimin' wud his bow an' arrer at me hearrt. Ye see, Irish litherature is different ag'in from Italian. Sure an' if a bunch o' Paddies wint into the tinder correspondence like this, like as not they'd have me in a picture, peg an' all, shlapin' in the heart av a rose, like they do be in Hoyt's Gerrman Cologne advertizemints, an' mebbe a bumble-bee wud ould Socola's face on 'im threatenin' the unconscious shlaper wud wan av his regular breech-loaders! Ye see, it 'd be a bit cheerful, but aqually to the point. Sure there's no life nor joy in a bare shin-bone, lest ye'd have it raised like a fearless sprig o' shillelah."

By this time he had opened both letters.

"Now," he continued, "droth an' I don't know which o' these two shtate dokimints ye sint me, or whether ye're wan o' thim scriptural chaps that kapes yer right hand in ignorance o' the thricks o' the left, an' yer two hands unbeknowinst to wan anither have sint me a frindly warrnin'; but r'a'ly and truly I'm very much obliged to ye."

Pat had given him no chance to reply, but now

he saw that the Italian's attitude was one of protest.

"Know northeen 'bouth," he was saying, gently.

"Whut! D'ye mane to say ye niver sint me nayther wan o' dthese letthers?"

"Know northeen 'bouth," he repeated, with an apathy of manner that was almost convincing.

Pat scratched his head.

"Mary Ann's mother-in-law!" he exclaimed, and, after a pause:

"Thin who in the name o' Donnybrook Fair done ut? Ye're the only mon who *cud* write ut. Sure none o' thim chaps last night knowed nothin' about the throuble at Socola's marriage till I towld ut, an' faith ye're the only mon there that knowed I shpoke the truth."

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

"Me, I no know 'f ees-a thrue."

This was too much.

"Don't know if ut's thrue! The divil ye don't! An' didn't ye come the night o' the marriage an' explain to me, worrd for worrd, the way Socola put the Mafia currse on him that 'd tell?"

The Sicilian smiled. "Me, I know northeen 'bouth-a Signor Socola—northeen 'bouth-a Mafia —northeen 'bouth-a northeen!"

"An' ye weren't at the Di Carlos' this night twelvemonth past?"

"Scuza me, my frien', 'f you please. 'M in-a gread-a hoary. Me, 'm-a allawa fo' business."

He hesitated here, and, looking round cautiously, lowered his voice as he took Pat's hand.

"Tell-a you thrue," he said, with a nearer approach to animation than he had yet shown—"tell-a you thrue, 'f I was-a ged a ledther ligue thad, me, I would-a theng God I haf time run quig hide-a myselve. Well—goo'-by! Hofe-a you good lug." And he turned away.

A sudden light came into the Irishman's face.

"Howld on a bit!" he exclaimed. "Howld—on—a—bit! I've a purrty thick shkull on me, but I do begin to see the dthrift 'f yer iloquence. Plaze to presint me complimints to the gintleman that sint me the letthers, if ye do chance to run aground av 'im on the boulevards, an' tell 'im *I'll not run, nor hide nayther!*"

Gathering emphasis here by a moment's silence, he leaned forward and looked the Sicilian squarely in the eye.

"There's a bit av a song we do sing in the ould counthry. Perchance ye've niver heerd ut, but I'm that interested in the cultivation av yer mind I'll tell ut out to ye partly:

"'S'int Patthrick was a gintleman,
And kem av dacent people;
He built a church in Dublin town
An' on ut put a shteeple.
His father was a Gallagher,
His mother was a Brady,
His aunt was an O'Shaughnessy,
His uncle was O'Grady.

So success attind S'int Patthrick's fist,
For he was a saint so clever—
Oh, he gave the shnakes and toads a twist
That bothered thim forever.'

"Ye see, that's a beautiful po'm, Misther—Misther Know-northin', wud solud Irish sintimints, an' the whole moral law jellied down into shtandin'-shape in the chorus."

He moved backwards a step here, and touched his own breast as he continued:

"The 'umble perrson ye do see before ye is a fractional descindant along 'th bein' a namesake o' the gintleman, S'int Patthrick himself, an', up to the prisent moment, sure *success has always attinded his fist!* We're av a pedigree that has no use for toads norr shnakes, norr onything toadyin' norr shnakin'—beyant givin' thim a twist that'll bother thim forever. Sure I kem down this morrnin' with the 'onerable intintion o' latherin' the bit av a varmint, Socola, wud me fist, but the wave o' prosperity—or posterity, whichever ye like—lifted him beyant me entirely. But I'll be down again, plaze God, in a couple o' days, *wud S'int Patthrick's weapon!*"

He held up his clenched fist. "And now," he added, extending his hand, "I do wish ye goodday!"

The Sicilian stood and looked after him a moment in bewilderment, and then he said something, presumably in Anglo-Italian; at least, it

sounded like "Damfoo'," a word not found in English print.

By a strange coincidence, Pat said the same word as he turned the corner. He had picked up a good deal of the colloquial *patois* of these people.

When Socola returned to his shop on the next day, a little withered grotesque impersonation of bilious pomposity, his inner consciousness nevertheless corresponded to his own best ideal of a noble, dignified, and tender father.

Indeed, he felt father to all the world, excepting, of course, the dear woman to whom he was husband; and this exception was as distinct and as tender and sensitive as only this particularly potent occasion could make it.

He had hitherto known nothing so exquisitely refined as the almost reverential tenderness with which his intensely masculine heart went out to the sallow little mother and the tiny yellow manchild who lay upon her breast to-day. The combination was something to live for, to fight for, to die for—almost.

And Pat's offence was against this embodiment of sacredness—this woman—this infant.

The accidental wife—the incidental babe! How the thought would cheapen the sacred possessions in the vulgar mind! To Socola himself, when it all dimly recurred to him, it seemed almost a dream which he no longer more than half believed. If he were choosing again, he could choose no other

woman of all the world ; and surely he would have no other babe than this!

When the two men, the one with the blind eye and the other, came together in the shop on this second day and gave to Socola, separately, as opportunity offered, the sign of the Mafia, it was a signal to withdraw hastily with them into his private office.

A subordinate gives the summons to his chief only when a communication of importance is pending.

When he returned to the shop, an hour later, the old man was still blue about the lips, and his hands trembled as he swore promiscuous oaths indiscriminately at the employés of the shop for imaginary offences.

The two men had gone silently together out of the side door with their heads down.

Although Pat was restless in view of an impending row and eager to have it over, gauging the probable duration of an Italian's spree by the Hibernian standard, he did not think it worth while to return to the city for several days.

The gentleman from Palermo had in the meantime had much time for sober reflection. He had, of course, heard of Pat's projected visit, and was ready for him—with an extended hand.

Indeed, no crafty diplomat ever confounded an adversary with a more gracious and smiling suavity than that with which he greeted and disarmed

his ingenuous guest when, on the Thursday following, Pat re-entered his shop.

Socola's English vocabulary, at best a matter of a few hundred words, seemed to-day to have shrunken until it was less only than his comprehension.

He failed utterly to understand that there could be anything disagreeable in his visitor's mission.

The interview, a ludicrous pantomimic affair throughout, ended by a mutual hand-shaking confession of friendly feeling, and Pat went away entirely satisfied that either a mistake had been made, the Sicilian had forgotten his oath, or the coming of the babe had indeed crowded murder out of the father's heart.

He had personally no longer a quarrel with the old man. He had refuted the lie, and was simply willing to stand by the refutation.

If he had glanced backwards as he left the shop and seen the menacing scowl that followed his receding figure, he would perhaps have understood.

From Socola's presence he went up "home," to the Di Carlos'. Here, to his dismay, two more notes of solemn warning awaited him.

Both were unsealed. Indeed, they were written on unfolded scraps of paper, and were found slipped in beneath the door, just as the first had been.

When the signora had called Pat into an inner room, she closed the door and turned gray with pallor as she handed them to him.

Her fear of the law, of death, of purgatory, of hell, was vague and as nothing to her terror of the vengeance of the Mafia. None of her family were members of the dread organization, but she remembered only too vividly how the husband of her first-cousin had years ago received just such a warning as this, and one day he had gone as usual to his work and had never come home again.

Ever since she had had the letters in her possession she had felt as if the angel of death were hovering over the house.

As she stood at Pat's side and saw him read the words of warning she began to cry.

"Fo' God sague, Meester Pad, wad you ees-a been do?" she moaned.

Pat laughed.

"Well, ma'am," said he, "at the present moment I'm jist afther a second visit to yer yung frind, Socola. We're that thick ye'd think we were twins—or thriplets mebbe, an' I was two an' he only wan — the way he does bow an' schrape right an' left to me."

"Socola!"

If Pat had said he had just returned from a visit to his Satanic majesty, she would not have been much more startled. "Socola! You ees-a been see Socola! Fo' God sague, how you ees-a fin' 'im?"

"Find 'im! Faith an' he's as well as cud be expected afther havin' a fine b'y a-Sunda' night. Ye

see, it does be very dangerous whin a firrst b'y is borrn to an ould man. It does fly to his head an' set 'im ravin' crazy. I b'lave the docthers do call it puerile faver. Did ye niver heer av ut?"

The woman was too much concerned even to realize that he was jesting.

"Wad 'e sayce to you?" she asked, eagerly.

"Sure an' he sez he wants to name the yungsther afther me; but I'm that proud I won't allow ut. Ye see, the shtyle av beauty in the Rooney family has been preserrved through thick an' thin wud great pains, an' I'd niver consint to take a risk on Socola's f'atures, wud no promise av relafe from her loyal accidency the madam. Ye see, a proud man must protect his name as well as his fame."

This bantering, really only a ruse to gain time to reflect a little on the situation, was becoming very trying to the signora. Pat became suddenly conscious that there were genuine tears in her eyes.

"Niver mind, now, niver mind," he said, with real feeling. "Don't fret yersilf because a couple o' cranks do sind me a valentine. Faith, there's northin' in ut, but mebbe a thrick o' the shoe thrade to dthrive me out o' the competition."

He then briefly reviewed his two visits to the old Sicilian, omitting the occasion of his going, and laying special stress on all the pleasant features of their meetings.

But she was not to be so easily appeased. She

lowered her voice almost to a whisper when she spoke again :

"Tell-a you thrue, Meester Pad, me an' Carlo ees-a been hear sometheen."

"Heerd something, did ye? An' whut was ut?"

"Plenny young mans ees-a tell me an' Carlo you ees-a say sometheen 'boud-a C'lotta an' Signor Socola. All-a peoples ees-a talkin' 'boud."

"They are, are they? An' whut if I did? An' whut did ye say?"

"Me? Of-a coze I sayce ees-a no true : Socola ees-a neva was-a lova-a C'lotta."

"Ye did, did ye? An' whut did 'er father say?"

"Carlo sayce you ees-a just a mague-a lill fun ; *'z no true.*"

Pat scratched his head. "An' betune the two av yez ye've made me out a bloomin' liur, now—haven't yez?"

"'F I mague you oud a lie, I mague you just-a pardner fo' myselve. Fo' God sague, lis'n ad me, Meester Pad. 'Z no time fo' talk 'boud lie. 'Z-a time fo' business. You muz-a go just-a so quig as you can-a go an' tell all-a doze young mans you was-a just-a play'n'."

Even the strong friendship evinced by her intense anxiety failed to palliate the affront of her proposition in Pat's eyes. He looked at her, bit his lip, and, without a word, turned on his heel and left her.

As he passed out the door the sound of a sob reached his ear. He was back in a moment.

"Fo' the love o' shad, ma'am, don't—*don't fret.* Niver mind, now, I tell ye. If ye cry anither dthrop I'll howl out a high tenor mesilf to match ye. Sure it 'll be all right now, I'll promise ye. I'll shtep out by-an'-by till I do find the crowd, an' I'll make a bit av a spache that 'll silence thim, an' they'll niver lay a hand on me. I'll promise ye that. Come on out, now."

"Tell 'm ees-a no true, Meester Pad. Say you was just-a mague fun. An' anyhow, I b'lief ees-a bedder you go 'way."

She sobbed again.

"Well, I declare, ma'am, I'm that ashamed av ye! Ye're frettin' yersilf about northin'—an' Socola an' me like two peas, a green wan an' a dthry wan, in wan pod. Come on out, now. Sure the crowd around the shteps are all half ashlape, an' they'll have no fun till ye do come an' wake thim up wud a good laugh. Come, now. The royal consorrt an' all yer majesty's loyal subjects 'll not dare open parliamint till the queen does arrive."

With a comical bobbing courtesy he made way for her to pass out. Sniffling and wiping her eyes, she escaped to her own room for a moment, but it was not long before she joined the circle on the *banquette.*

It was a sultry summer afternoon, and the scene about the doors was drowsy enough indeed. The little father Di Carlo nodded on his barrel. The baby, a mosquito-netting stretched over her face,

lay sleeping in her willow cradle at his side. Several men lounged on the benches, talking lazily in Italian, and fighting the flies with their red cotton kerchiefs.

Within the shop the boy Pasquale stood languidly opening oysters for a black girl, who, leaning with half her tall length spread over the counter, indolently chewed a cud of gum as she waited with bovine patience while her bucket was slowly filling.

Half-way down the block a chattering group of neighborhood children, among whom was a generous sprinkling of Di Carlos, were playing in the doubtful shade of a tallow-tree. Some sat with their laps piled high with china blossoms, which they strung on threads into fragrant purple necklaces. A pair of girls played "jack-stones" on the fronts of their dress-skirts lapped one over the other on the ground, while others, arm in arm, promenaded up and down, shading themselves, after the fashion of Paul and Virginia, with tall green banana leaves, purloined from over a neighboring fence.

Somewhat apart from the other children, and nearer the shop, two taller girls sat crocheting cotton lace, while their toddling charges slept at their sides.

Pat, whose seat commanded a view of them, was not long in discovering that the smaller of these two was Carlotta, and, while he passed idly from one subject to another, challenging conversation at

random with his drowsy company, he delighted to watch her as the oblique rays of the sun revealed her each moment more clearly to him.

"Five times thim two childer have dropped their nadles to measure their lace, or fringe, or whativer ye call it," he said, presently, laughing. "Sure I'm goin' to watch thim now, an' the seventh time they do measure ut I'll up an' be off. I've a call to make a spache to some o' me constituents, an' I must hunt thim up. I do fale as lazy as the fly on the banana here at me elbow. See him walk like a bug from wan black ind to take a sup at the ither, too lazy to raise his wings an' fly. There they go again, the childer, God bless thim! measurin' again! Six times in forrty minutes. Sure they've harrdly time to put a tuck in ut betune the two measures."

The signora laughed heartily. "Lis'n ad-a Meester Pad! Pood a tug in-a lace! I swea' you would-a mague a dead dog laugh."

Her laughter did Pat good. "Sure a tuck or a him are all wan to a tailor in leather," he replied, unconsciously coming into the domain of Carlyle's thought.

"But tell me, ma'am," he continued, "how do ye ladies him fringes, onyway? I cudn't forr the life av me him a fringe, nor scallop it naythe r."

She screamed with laughter now. "My God! Hem a fringe! Nobody can-a hem a fringe."

"Is that so? An' d' ye fringe the hims? I'm not jokin'. Faith I niver so much as fringed a

scallop in me life, let alone a him. Tell me, now, d' yez dthraw threads, orr dthrop stitches, or pucker it on the bias? Och, there now! I must go! the two girrls beyant are measurin' their scallops again. Well, so long, ma'am! I'll be back in the autumn, plaze God, 'whin the l'aves begin to fall.'"

She was laughing so that she could not speak when Pat rose to go.

"Since ye do insist upon ut," he added, as he turned away, "I b'lave I'll change me summer plans an' come back be supper-time. Put an exthra sup av coffee in the dthripper, plaze, an' dthrop the name av Rooney promiscuously in the pots."

"All-a righd! Muz-a be shore, shore come to supper. Prormus you sometheen good."

This was a thing Pat rarely did; and she was delighted. Even had she not known that he would come in laden with paper bags full of good things to add to the supper-table, she would have been just as glad to set his plate in between little Pat's and Carlotta's.

Pat had no trouble in finding the "constituents" whom he wanted to meet. He knew that at this hour certain Italians would be sure to congregate at their favorite rendezvous, a coffee-house near the levee. He was glad to find Tramonetti, and others who were present on the former occasion, already there.

It took but a few moments to repeat his former

account of the Socola wedding, which he colored with new drolleries in the narration, and to add— and this was the object of his visit — the item carelessly omitted before — viz., Socola's threat that the Mafia would avenge a betrayal of the affair.

This, he carefully explained, was the reason his good friends the Di Carlos had felt constrained to deny it. They were afraid of the Mafia. They couldn't understand how he and Socola understood each other perfectly now, and, after all, it was a small matter whether Socola had been jilted or not: who cared? It was a thing of the past. For himself, he only mentioned it again to prove that he hadn't lied before. The whole business was, he finally declared, "a timpest in a tay-pot," and the sooner forgotten the better. He ended by begging them not to "worry the madam" by saying anything more about it at the Di Carlos'.

"Sure the madam's been wapin' an' wailin' for feer I'll be kilt entirely. She thinks I'm out this minute tellin' ye all I was jokin' an' thryin' to back out av the whole shtatemint. Sure I'd back out in a minute if I knowed a back-shtep; but when I tuck dancin'-lessons in Paris whin I was a yungshter, I niver learrned the craw-fish movement, an' faith it's too late in life now to dthrag me wooden peg into a new figure. There's but three-quarrters av me left, onyhow, but it's three-quarrters av a *man's shape*, praise God, an' I'll

not disgrace the fraction, for the likeness it does bear me mother, God rest her."

The crowd were rather still and subdued for some time after Pat left them.

"I'm sorry I ever opened my lips about Socola's business," said one, finally, in Italian; "but, anyhow, I told where I heard it."

"I never said anything to anybody," said another, "and I'm glad. I don't want any of his flock of vampires following me in the dark."

"But I'd hate to be in that Irishman's shoes!"

"In his one shoe, you mean. And me too. So would I."

VI

For several months after this things seemed to drift along as usual.

Pat's prosperity, already assured though plodding, had been unexpectedly accelerated by the sudden death of his partner, whose widow had preferred a settlement in cash to the possible risk of an investment subject to the vicissitudes of trade. This left Pat in sole possession of a promising little business, and he was doing well.

He still went "home" nearly every Sunday; and, as Carlotta had of late been especially kind to him, he began to feel that the materialization of his hopes was not far distant.

The youth Rubino still hung about the shop

with his accordion, and once Pat had found him and Carlotta out walking together when he came on Sunday afternoon. He said to himself that it was all right for her to be happy in her own youthful way, and he tried to feel glad. Indeed, if he were not wholly so at the time, her hearty greeting when she came home in a little while made him forget it all.

So the winter passed—a second since the Socola affair. In a month Carlotta would pass her eighteenth birthday. Things were coming very close.

Pat feared no opposition from the Di Carlo parents. Indeed, the signora, in her relation of unconscious mother-in-law elect, was a joy to his Irish heart. She had evidently no suspicion of the truth, and, in face of Pat's blossoming out into a successful gentleman, had been unable to refrain from throwing out occasional hints recalling his early fancy for Carlotta. And Pat, the while laughing in his sleeve, kept her in continual suspense by hinting at other possible alliances, as when he said:

"Sure an' I wush ye cud see the widdy Schmidt, how purrty an' yung she is since the ould man's gone. Troth an' ye may heer any day av an elopemint in high life. Sure I tould 'er we betther wait till the Berrmuda is firrmly rooted on the ould gintleman's grave — God rist 'im! — an' — wud ye bel'ave? — she does northin' but shprinkle it wud a watherin'-pot since."

"Oh–h–h, 'z-a shame fo' you, Meester Pad, talk

like thad! Can get plenny pritty young-a woma' yed."

"I've not fully made up me mind yet, ma'am, sure, till I do see wull she turrn back all the capital she dthrew out av the thrade an' promise me a day off once a wake from cinnamon-cake till I do fale me pulse an' starrt fresh."

It was no wonder the signora missed Pat out of her daily life. He made so much fun. Was it strange she wanted to secure him?

It was at last Carlotta's birthday. Pat had come to town rather earlier than usual, intending to take her — alone for the first time — out for a ride. They would go up to the Carrollton Garden and sit on one of the little benches together under a tree; and when they came home they would tell "the madam" and ask her blessing.

He knew just the funny things he would say as he would present the little bald spot on his head for her maternal blessing. And then they would have to tell — or rather to ask — the father. He scratched his head a little nervously at this thought, and wished the ordeal were over; yet he would get through somehow, and "carry it off" with whatever inspiration the moment should bring.

He was dressed in his very best, and would have given much to wear his artificial leg for the occasion. He would have liked to appear as a whole man walking at her side to-night.

It was just merging into twilight when he ap-

proached the shop, and the family sat, as usual, about the doors.

"An' where's Lottie?" he asked, as he joined the circle.

He had never called for her in this way before, but he was too near the edge of things to-night to think or to care.

"C'lotta ees-a just now gone oud-a walk weeth Giuseppe Rubino. Sid down, Meester Pad." And the signora lifted her foot from the rung of a stool and pushed it towards him.

He sat down, but he was uneasy.

After a little while, during which, the signora afterwards said, he had never been more lively or witty, he rose and left them.

For the last three Saturday evenings Carlotta had been out with Giuseppe when he came, but he had tried not to think seriously of it. But to-night! Had she not remembered? Did she not realize that to-day meant much to him—and to her? He would pass the hour until he should be *sure* to find her at home in his favorite retreat on the river-bank, alone. There would be no demand upon him here, and he could get himself together again; for he was keenly hurt.

As he left the Di Carlos', he could not see that two men — Sicilians they were — who stood together in the shadow of the wall across the way, moved slowly after him until he stopped the car, when, quickening their paces, they also jumped aboard, one seating himself within, while the

other passed out to the platform with the driver. Neither could he know when he crossed the wharf that these two men watched and by separate routes followed him at a distance as he disappeared among the shadows between the piles of freight along the pier.

The river was high, and when he reached his accustomed seat the floating wharf which was chained to the heavy timbers attracted him. He had never been down here, but a pair of hanging steps invited the folly of his descent to-night, and he had soon hobbled down and seated himself on the inner edge of the raft, and thus within the shadow of the pier above. It pleased his mood to get thus near the turbulent, restless waters for a while.

To sit in a little black shadow while he waited for Carlotta to come home with Giuseppe suited him to-night; while the booming, swelling, resistless river which lifted him upon its bosom and seemed threatening to submerge everything was typical of his love.

His thoughts had hardly begun to cool and shape themselves when, first vaguely, as at a distance, and now nearer, clearer, came the sound of an accordion.

On summer evenings, almost anywhere along the river-bank one may expect to find a sprinkling of accordion-players—usually German kitchen-courtships out for an airing—and there should have been nothing very startling in the sound;

yet its first note made the Irishman's heart stand still. He knew the most distant reach of Giuseppe's accordion. It had come out to meet him too often in the evenings for him to mistake it now. It was coming very near, and soon he began to hear voices—Carlotta's and the youth's. They were sitting down on the wharf just above his head. Broken snatches of tunes proved that Giuseppe was toying thoughtlessly with his instrument, and while he played he was earnestly talking. Soon the music stopped altogether, the voice fell lower, more serious, more indistinct. It seemed to Pat that the boy talked for an age; but he could distinguish nothing.

But presently Carlotta spoke, clearly:

"No, no, Giuseppe. Hush! I can't lis'n at you!"

Then again Giuseppe muttered in a tone indistinct as to words, but full of pleading.

And now Carlotta again:

"Hush, I say, Giuseppe! I *mus'n't* lis'n at you! I wish I was dead! I hate you!—I hate myself! —I hate your music!—I hate everything! Before you came, I was satisfied. Everything was promise good, an' I never knowed no better. Now, when I put my finger in my ears, I hear you sing —I hear that music. Oh, I hate it all! To-night I ought to be home, and I am here with you—always with you."

He spoke more clearly now in Italian: "But why do you speak so, Carlotta? It is not true

that you hate me. You love me—I know it, I feel it. Since first I saw you, I knew we were for each other."

"But no, Giuseppe. Hush, I say! I can't be for you. Since two years I am promised. My word is passed."

"And who is it that holds a child by her word when she loves him not?"

"Oh, hush, Giuseppe! He don't hold me. I hold myself. He is the best man in all the world. He loves me more than even my maw. Since I was *so* big he loved me and I loved him good; but since you came I am not the same. I am not fit. I run away with you, and then when I see him I am sorry, and speak kind with him, but all the time I see you. He trusts me, Giuseppe, same like I trust the blessed Mother—he even put my name by her name once—and you have all broken me hearted, Giuseppe, an' made me turn away from him. I wish I was dead!—and you!—and him!"

There were tears in her voice.

"But listen, Carlotta. You don't understand. Nothing is true but love. Everything else comes after—promises, mistakes, all—everything! Love is from God Almighty. He never sends love like mine but he sends the answer too. For two months I have read my answer in your eyes, and was satisfied; but it was sweet to wait, to sing, to play, to laugh all around it, making believe I was not sure. But *I am sure. You are mine!*"

"Oh, but no, no, no, Guiseppe! I am not for you. If I was that mean, God would never bless me nor you. It would be a curse. You cannot understand."

"Who is this coward who holds you?"

"But hush! He is no coward, Giuseppe. Me, I am a coward—but not him. It was me what made him speak love. You talk about God! For what does God let us make mistakes! How can we be *sure?* I was crazy for him, and in my heart I felt sure—*sure* it was love, and I told him, Giuseppe. I made him to love me. And now—if only you go away, Giuseppe! If you love me true, go, and let me have peace and not trouble. Go far, and let me forget the sound of your music—let me forget your eyes—let me not see your shape in the air which way I turn. Then it will all pass away, and I will be like before. I love him good, Giuseppe. I am not a liar. Only now I am like in a dream, and in my dream I see only you. Now I see, I know, what you meant, Giuseppe, when you said in your sleep I stood before you. But soon I will wake. I will see his kind eyes, and it will pass. He will never know."

"And who is this man for whom you put me away?"

"It is time enough, Giuseppe; but better if you never know him. Go far away."

"I go not away without you, Carlotta. Every day I will come till I get you. I will walk by your

side before this man, and when he looks at us he will see he is a fool."

"I walk with you no more, Giuseppe. To-night finishes. Come, let us go. I heard a noise, and just now over there a shadow moved. I am afraid. Come."

As they rose to go, the accordion, which Giuseppe grasped hastily in rising, opening by its own weight, sent out an attenuated discordant wail. And to Pat, sitting alone in the shadow beneath, it sounded like a weird Banshee's shriek coming from far over the seas.

The tender tremor in Carlotta's voice when first she spoke Giuseppe's name had struck his heart like a death-knell, and the words which followed were but as clods falling upon a coffin. The girl's loyalty through it all seemed to mock him like a hymn at a grave. It was as the silver sheen upon the silken fabric of a shroud—the smile upon the face of death.

For a long time after they had gone the heavy timbers about him were not more still than he.

Once he thought he heard soft steps above him. If he had risen, he might have seen two dark figures peering stealthily about as if looking for some one. They might have been assassins in ambush.

But Pat did not even glance upward.

Can any one, by simply imagining, be sure he half understands how this man felt? or must he have passed through the shades of a like sorrow

to know its black, bleak depths and the hopelessness of it?

His first movement was to cast his eyes about him upon the water. It was all around him—so near—so inviting. It seemed almost to call him. It would have been so easy, from where he sat, just to lean over and over, like Maupassant's little blue-and-red soldier, as if he were trying to drink. There would be only a few bubbles—fit emblems of his life and its story—and so it would end.

Had he not promised her his grave whenever it would be a safe bridge over her troubles? The time had come. Or had it come? Would the plunge be for her sake or his own? Was he, after all, a coward—he who had never run from a foe in his life—who had even fought and vanquished his *potheen* with a flask in his pocket?

Distinct rapid footsteps above startled him, and he raised his eyes. As he did so, a bundle fell at his side into the water, and the steps retreated.

He seemed to see a struggle as the dark object twisted for a second within the rings of the eddy that swallowed it down; but he could not be sure. In a moment, however, he heard, quite near, the thin, wiry cry of a young kitten. He looked about him and above, but could see nothing of it, though the sound came again and again. Finally, however, a desperate wail located the sufferer.

On the outside of the heavy timbers, caught in its fall by a protruding splinter or spike, the wretched little creature hung suspended, its own

weight and struggles imprisoning it more securely each moment within the notch.

The struggling contents of the whirling bundle were explained. This little unfortunate had slipped out of the open bag in its fall, to perish high and dry in the night wind, or to be scorched by the sun should it survive the night.

Pat regarded the writhing little form a moment only.

"Sure we're in the same boat, kitty, you an' me," he said, aloud; "we're wan too many in a crowded worrld. But, plaze God, I'll give ye the same chance I'll take meself—in the name o' Him that shaped the two av us."

With this, seizing the fragment of a broken oar, he swung himself outside the timbers.

At the sound of his voice two black shadows rushed noiselessly across the wharf, and, quickly reaching the edge, peered over.

What they saw was only a whining young kitten crawling feebly along the raft.

The upward reach with the oar which liberated the little beast and sent him back to life had thrown his deliverer accidentally backward. The grip of his one leg about the post had served only to let him down, down, gently, noiselessly, into the eddying current, which sucked him under the raft without even a twirl or a twist. There was not so much as a gurgle of the waters as he sank.

The black figures waited a long time, lying on their faces and listening, and two stilettos were

drawn and ready. When the voice should speak again, they would do their work quickly; for the emissaries of the Mafia are wont to use despatch.

It was past midnight, and the moon was rising, when at last, despairing and mystified, they separated reluctantly, and by different routes went to report another failure to old Pietro Socola, their chief.

The Di Carlos wondered with great anxiety why Pat did not come home, and all during the night the signora started at every sound, fancying she heard his wooden peg ascending the stairs.

It was on the second day afterwards when a boy in the shop read from the daily paper that the body of a one-legged man had been washed up against a coal-barge floating in the river near Canal Street.

The father Di Carlo went immediately to investigate the matter, and when he came home an hour later, and the family gathered about him, anxious to hear the news, he only shook his head sadly, and, taking from his handkerchief an old red baby shoe, he said, "It was in his inside pocket."

Customers who came in at the time, and people passing by, thought from their distress that a member of the family was dead.

Carlotta, trembling and white as marble, went away alone.

An investigation of Pat's affairs and effects dis-

closed a will, made some years before, bequeathing to Carlotta all his worldly goods.

A large proportion of this—which proved quite a neat competence—she expended, despite her mother's frugal protest that it could do him no good, in a handsome marble shaft to his memory. In its unique inscription, which was of her own dictation, she sought to make some sort of reparation for the sin of which she accused herself.

The monument still stands in the corner of St. Patrick's Cemetery, and reads:

IN MEMORY
OF
Patrick Rooney,
INTEND OF CARLOTTA DI CARLO,
AGE, 42 YEARS.

And on any All-Saints' Day, Carlotta and Giuseppe, with their flock of beautiful children, may be seen to stop there for a while, leaving a bouquet of plush-topped coxcombs and a cross of white chrysanthemums.

THE END

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